

# Aide-de-Camp's Library



सत्यमेव जयते

Rashtrapati Bhavan  
New Delhi

Accn. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Call No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_







# MASQUERADER BRETT



*By the same author:*

**BROKEN SWORDS  
ETC.**

# MASQUERADER BRETT

*by*  
RICHARD FISHER



SELWYN & BLOUNT LTD.

LONDON :: NEW YORK :: MELBOURNE :: SYDNEY



DEDICATION.

For the story of  
MASQUERADER BRETT

I am deeply indebted to  
MARCEL HELLMAN  
for the vivid Film Story I have novelised

PRINTED IN  
GREAT BRITAIN,  
AT THE ANCHOR  
PRESS, LIVERPOOL.  
:: ESS LX ::

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. PLOT AND COUNTER-PLOT . . . . .	7
II. THE SPIDER SPINS HIS WEB . . . . .	15
III. "THE ENGAGEMENT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED . . ."	25
IV. A YOUNG MAN OF NO CONSEQUENCE . . . . .	38
V. POINT AND COUNTER-POINT . . . . .	54
VI. THE KING'S HIGHWAY . . . . .	64
VII. A MAN WITH THE STRANGEST HAT . . . . .	72
VIII. FIRST TRICK IN THE GAME . . . . .	87
IX. REJOICING IN THE NAME OF JFM PRINGLE . . . . .	95
X. THE ROAD TO THE NORTH . . . . .	114
XI. A WHITE ROSE OF SCOTLAND . . . . .	123
XII. A LADY COMES TO ENGLAND . . . . .	135
XIII. THE DISTAFF SIDE . . . . .	146
XIV. BEAUTY SPINS A WEB . . . . .	152
XV. THE DOVER ROAD . . . . .	166
XVI. WHITE CLOTHS AND AFTER . . . . .	177
XVII. LIGHT AND SHADOW . . . . .	198
XVIII. LADY PRIMROSE IS EMBARRASSED . . . . .	209
XIX. THE STRANGE VISITATION . . . . .	222
XX. THE HEART OF A PRINCE . . . . .	234
XXI. THE MASQUERADE IS ON . . . . .	244
XXII. MASQUERADER BRETT . . . . .	257
XXIII. H.M. GOVERNMENT IS AT A LOSS . . . . .	268
XXIV. ESCAPE TO HAPPINESS . . . . .	279
XXV. ONWARDS TO ENVOI . . . . .	289
ENVOI . . . . .	303



## CHAPTER ONE

### PLOT AND COUNTER-PLOT

SPRING had come again to England, and Kent, the Garden of England, was a vivid mass of succeeding fruit blossom. The winter of the years 1749-1750 had not been unduly severe, and no damaging late frosts had come, so now cherry, apple, pear and plum blossoms followed one another and vied in their glory and profusion.

As the poets say, Spring is the time of new hope. As the sap once again made its way up the stems and vegetation burst into life, so it was with the hearts of men and women, and their thoughts soared as the birds on the wing, and they grew gay in harmony with the gambolling beasts of the fields. They forgot the grey dreariness of the Winter and what lay behind them, they took counsel and thought ahead, hoping for a better and more peaceful way of life in This England which was so rapidly becoming merry again. For had not five years gone by since the Rising of the 'Forty-five and its bloody suppression by the House of Hanover and the Whigs, and though there might be many who had little liking for the Germans or the 'Merchant Princes', at least they could look forward with some security to a dawn of a prosperous age.

So the fruit blossoms nodded in a Spring breeze, and birds and bees were busy and all heralded for a fine crop, and that in itself an omen for the better livelihood of King George's subjects, and the good people of Kent looked over the fields and orchards towards the high spires of Canterbury Cathedral and thought this a pretty and peaceful sight, for was not Canterbury the centre and the birthplace of the Christian Faith in England? At least, though other ecclesiastical establishments might lay claim, the Kentish men preferred to think it was their Canterbury, and as proof positive did not the Primate of all England have his habitation in that sacred town?

English, Scots, Irish and Welsh alike wanted peace. There had been murmurings and whisperings that the Stuarts would come again and that Bonnie Prince Charlie lay just on the other side of the 'water' awaiting his opportunity. There were many who called themselves Jacobites—there were disgruntled Tory Lords, exiled chieftains and arrogant clergy who longed for the old regime, but for the average man and woman the wranglings of higher politics carried little interest. They looked upon such as being something in which they had no control and from which they invariably suffered when the time came.

The cloisters of Canterbury exuded peace, the great stately pile hallowed with memories of hundreds of years gave the lie to political machinations. Good Thomas Herring, a fine churchman—if a low one—was Primate and Archbishop of Canterbury. He was a man who went out amongst his



flock and held that where Christ's teachings began class distinction must cease. So said the townspeople, the fruit farmers and the labourers who chanced to come in daily touch with this worthy man. They felt that His Grace could not be moved or cajoled into doing aught which would offend his rigid conscience.

However, if the people of Canterbury on this Spring morning in the year 1750 had had eyes to see through walls and ears to listen to confidential discussion, they would have been almost alarmed at the interview which was taking place at that very moment inside the sanctum of the Archbishop's study, for here His Grace was giving an audience to an important officer of the State who had arrived only an hour before and was setting out in no uncertain terms the desires—nay, the commands—of Mr. Pelham, the Prime Minister of His Majesty King George II of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and the Colonies beyond the seas, and King of Hanover.

His Grace was seated at his desk, fidgeting nervously with a quill pen and trying his utmost to appear benign and at peace with all men.

Sprawling in a chair on the other side of the desk was William, Earl of Cooper and Solicitor-General in Mr. Pelham's 'Broad Bottom' Administration. Moreover, his lordship had just confronted His Grace with a display of considerable annoyance. He considered he had been put upon, and why it was necessary for him as a high officer of the Crown to have to perform this commission, which any officer of the Dragoons could have fulfilled equally well, he failed utterly to understand.

"But, my dear sir," protested the Archbishop, "what I have already said I say again. A man's faith is one thing, his politics are another. Surely you do not ask me as a priest to accept a theory that Christian teaching and Whig politics are made in one and the same mould?"

Lord Cooper ignored the Archbishop's protest. He went on to air his own troubles. "Why Mr. Pelham should think it is necessary to attend personally upon Your Grace is beyond my comprehension. Surely this matter could have been dealt with entirely by letter. For a high officer of the Crown to be forced to give up his valuable time is preposterous!"

The Archbishop sighed and regarded Lord Cooper with sorrowful eyes. He saw before him a man in the late thirties, arrogant and handsome. He was the son of the first and great Lord Cooper, who had been raised to the peerage for services, largely financial, to King George I during the difficult days of the Rising of the 'Fifteen. He was a member of what was described as the Merchant Aristocracy, a new section which had been created by the impecuniosity of the Hanovers and their constant requirements for money to help their needy Teutonic relations. True to type, he had not followed his father in the counting-house, but had taken his degree and turned his energies to the legal profession. Here he had shown some acumen, and although the fortunes which he had inherited from his merchant father were already sadly depleted, he had at least gained for himself some successes as an advocate. So, when Mr. Pelham had appointed him Solicitor-General in the 'Broad Bottom' Administration, the bloods of St. James's Street had accepted the promotion without undue comment. William had been their constant companion in the coffee-houses and clubs; he played a fine hand at cards,

knew a neat ankle when he saw one, and had every attribute for a man-about-town of that period. But somewhat to their surprise Lord Cooper had been able to combine his new legal offices with his thirst for enjoyment to an astonishing degree. He was still the man about the clubs, whilst the senior legal officers of the 'Broad Bottom' Administration, who had wagged their heads when the appointment was first announced, now agreed that the Prime Minister had achieved something of a find in his unexpected Solicitor-General.

However, the present Earl of Cooper was far from pleased with his present commission. He felt that the Prime Minister was imposing upon him and that he was paying dearly for his preferment. For instance, this very morning he had been forced to leave London with the first greying of dawn to ride break-neck along the Pilgrims' Way and to arrive at Canterbury sore in body and empty in stomach. For what reason all this energy? Simply and solely because Mr. Pelham wished him to deliver personally into the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury a pettifogging letter which expressed the Prime Minister's desire for the removal of a priest with Jacobite leanings from the Kentish living of Ightham. The whole situation was *infra dignitatum* and a preposterous imposition. In fact, had not his lordship spent considerably more than he anticipated in gaining the office of Solicitor-General he would have thrown his appointment into the Prime Minister's teeth. However, Lord Cooper was at the moment labouring under considerable financial embarrassment, and should he suddenly leave office he realized that his creditors would be after him with a vengeance. Whilst he remained Solicitor-General at least he received a certain steady income from the Crown and, moreover, was in a position from which he hoped sooner or later either to insinuate himself into a brilliant match or, alternatively, achieve it by a little legal blackmail.

The Archbishop of Canterbury was rereading the letter which his lordship had so recently brought. Cooper thought it better to leave him to his own devices and gazed morosely out of the window upon the Primate's flower-beds and the cloisters beyond. The bells of the cathedral had started to ring, and to Cooper's ears their sound was an interminable jangle. There was a knock at the door and a servant brought in a decanter and glasses and placed them reverently at the side of His Grace, who made no apparent display of hospitable intentions, but instead continued to peruse the letter, blowing his cheeks and tapping with his fingers upon the polished surface of his desk.

"There is some urgency, Your Grace," said Lord Cooper. "The Prime Minister desires that Doctor Arnold King should be inhibited from his living as soon as possible." He cleared his throat. "Doctor King is a notorious Jacobite, an upholder of the Pretender and his position so close to the coast and to the Continent makes him conveniently placed to further intrigue." His lordship paused to look meaningly at the Archbishop. He wondered if it would be tactful to remind Thomas Herring that he owed his preference and present position to the Whig Party.

"I quite understand the Prime Minister's sentiments," said His Grace thoughtfully, "but you must appreciate my own. Doctor King is a fine churchman, an excellent preacher, and the congregation at Ightham is more

than satisfied with him. I cannot see that this is an ecclesiastical matter. If King is guilty of treasonable practices, surely it is for the law to stretch out its hand and take him."

Cooper frowned. "Your Grace will appreciate," he said stiffly, "that Mr. Pelham and the Cabinet have considered every aspect concerning this matter. The temper of the populace is a little difficult. They object to what they term 'oppression'. Although we fully know the machinations of the Jacobites, we do not feel that the time is ripe for legal action."

The Archbishop demurred. "That is all very well, my lord, but Doctor King is the late Principal of St. Mary's Hall, Oxford. He is one of the foremost divines of the Church of England, and only his unfortunate liking for the Stuarts has prevented his preferment to a See."

"I am not here to bandy words on the ethics of Doctor King's ecclesiastical attributes," snapped Cooper. "I am here as His Majesty's Solicitor-General conveying a message from His Majesty's First Lord of the Treasury requesting the removal of Doctor King from his living."

"That is very impertinent, my Lord Cooper," said Thomas Herring with an unusual show of spirit.

Cooper shrugged. "Your Grace, there can be no impertinence from anyone who carries out the orders of his King."

The Archbishop rose to his feet, he pulled down his apron and set his sleeves.

"We will not pursue the conversation any further, save that I will say that a cure of souls seems to me more a matter for God than for His Majesty."

Cooper waved aside this suggestion.

"I take it, Your Grace, that Mr. Pelham's wishes will be carried out."

The Archbishop did not speak but made a slight inclination of his head. After all, he was a married man with several children whose education and extravagances were causing him considerable outlay; though at heart a good Christian, he felt that he had not the right to argue with his bread and butter, which in this instance was essentially controlled by King George II and Mr. Henry Pelham. However, he made no show of hospitality towards Lord Cooper. The decanter remained untouched and the glasses unused. In obedience to the ringing of a hand-bell, the Archbishop's chaplain appeared in the doorway and received his instructions to escort his lordship from the palace.

William Cooper reached the courtyard, hardly acknowledged the chaplain's polite 'Goodday', flung himself into his saddle, and, without rhyme or reason, let fly a string of oaths at his groom who stood patiently at the horse's head. The poor fellow was used to this and with a wry face let his lordship gallop away, then he himself mounted and rode after him.

Sam Jakes had been his lordship's groom many a year. In fact, he had first started in his service way back in the undergraduate days at Cambridge, and during the years of service that had followed he had come by many a licking and a cursing for his pains. However, to be an earl's groom had its perquisites and Sam's skin had toughened in the process.

As they rode out of Canterbury the clocks were striking four o'clock, and his lordship put spurs to his horse and set off at a brisk gallop towards

London. Sam Jakes, riding second horseman on a tired beast, made no effort to keep up, but he wagged his head sagely as he watched his master's rapidly diminishing figure all but swallowed in a welter of dust. There was a gay hurry to get back to London and Sam Jakes reckoned he knew the reason why: his lordship was putting on all speed to reach London in time for Lady Primrose's soirée, which was to be held that very night at her town house in Essex Street, Strand. The groom rubbed his chin and grew thoughtful. This attraction of his lordship for the Primrose parties was a queer business. For here was a pillar of the Whig administration dancing attendance at a household which was notorious for its Jacobite sympathies! The groom, after the manner of his kind, had spent more time than was good for him in the taverns and coffee-houses where gentlemen's servants were wont to gather, and he had picked up the gossip here and there. The Earl of Primrose had many broad acres which, despite his Jacobite activities, had remained to him throughout the troublous times. Also he had a daughter, the Lady Angela, and she was a high-stepping beauty if ever there was one, for all she was a girl hardly out of her teens. Jakes had put two and two together, and two and two to his way of thinking made four. His master had had to take employment as Solicitor-General and he had little liking for the work, or, for that matter, for work of any sort. Well, if his lordship could make a match of it with Angela Primrose, who was an only child, it would not be such bad business on his part, and maybe the Earl of Primrose would not be so loth to marry off his daughter with a Cooper if by that means he could allay the cloud of suspicion which seemed to have settled upon him.

Sam Jakes kicked his horse to an unwilling trot and as he jogged along the Pilgrims' Way he turned over a dozen and more thoughts in his mind. He wondered if Lord Cooper's temper would be any the sweeter with an heiress bride and money in his pocket to burn. He smiled sourly. To his way of thinking it'd take little short of a miracle to do that.

. . . . .

Primrose House, in Essex Street, Strand, was a large mansion, partially built in the time of Charles II, with additions of the William and Mary period. In every essential it was a town mansion and a building worthy of a rich nobleman. It was not a place of particular beauty, being somewhat rambling and an incongruous mixture of stone and brick. However, it was largely hidden from the ordinary passer-by, for a high wall surrounded it on all sides, and this not only contained the house but a big stretch of garden which ran downwards to the banks of the Thames.

Inside the mansion there was a great deal of orderly preparation. In the main hall Boulter, the resplendent major-domo, was consulting a list of more than fifty guests and detailing orders to the attendant footmen. There would be music in the Music Room, and cards in the Card Room, the supper would be served in the Great Dining Hall, and the Library would be used as a buffet for the gentlemen. The ladies would go up the main stairway and take off their wraps in the Silver and Blue Bedroom, and the gentlemen could

use the ante-chamber on the right of the entrance hall. Now, about the wines; Boulter produced another list from the pocket of his coat-tails. Brandy, of course, and port. A white wine-cup for the mesdames, and a claret cup. Spanish wines for those who liked them; and cordials and liqueurs, and especially the cherry brandy. Was there anything else?

Boulter sighed. He must be off to the kitchen to see how things were going there. He would be ready to make a full report to her ladyship half an hour before the first of the guests were expected to arrive, for such were his standing orders. He regarded the footmen sourly, straightening a cravat here and an *aiguillette* there. There was the question of precedence: were all the men quite clear about this most important factor? There must be no mistakes; his lordship and her ladyship were most particular about such matters.

The major-domo was just about to dismiss the footmen when the heavy clanging of the outdoor bell interrupted. A footman, crossing, threw open the door, and Boulter stepped forward to greet the arrival.

"The Right Honourable the Earl of Westmorland," announced the footman.

Boulter gulped. "Your lordship!" he exclaimed, as Lord Westmorland strode forward. Certainly his lordship looked in no shape to come to an evening party. He was in riding clothes, his boots were stained with mud and his box-cloth coat heavy with dust.

"Your lordship," repeated Boulter. "Has anything untoward occurred?"

Lord Westmorland swept him aside. He was a middle-aged angular man, tall in height, and looked every inch a horseman and, maybe, a soldier.

"I wish to see your master immediately."

"Lord Primrose?" said Boulter, with some apprehension. "His lordship is at present engaged."

"Who with?"

Boulter hesitated. "His Grace the Duke of Beaufort is in conference with him, and Sir Charles Cochrane and my Lord Graham are also present."

"Good," said Lord Westmorland briskly. "Take me to them at once."

Boulter gave a sign for the footmen to efface themselves and led the way across the hall and into a passage heavily lined with books and decorated with portraits of a succession of Primroses. He arrived before a door at the farther end. Here he knocked gently and a voice from inside bade him enter.

"The Right Honourable the Earl of Westmorland," he announced.

Lord Westmorland strode past him, and with a heel-kick slammed the door in the face of the astonished butler.

Four gentlemen were sitting at the table which occupied the centre of the room, but on Lord Westmorland's dramatic entrance they rose quickly to their feet.

The Earl of Primrose, a middle-aged, aesthetic, nervous person, came forward to greet the new arrival.

"Westmorland, my dear fellow! I thought you were a hundred miles away. How come you to be here, and so unexpectedly? Gad! You've ridden hard?"

"A man who rides hard brings bad tidings," grumbled the Duke of Beaufort. "What is it, Tony?"

Anthony Westmorland threw his hat and crop upon the table. "You speak a truism, Beaufort, the news is bad. Listen, all of you. You know I rode to Maidstone on my own business. Well, I dropped on something by chance. That courier of yours, Primrose—Jasper Sharpe?"

"Yes," faltered Primrose, "what of him?"

"You sent him to Flushing, didn't you, to make contact with Prince Charles Edward Stuart?"

"Our rightful Prince of Wales," objected Graham.

"We split straws," snapped Westmorland. "The Dragoons caught this fellow Sharpe at the 'Rose and Crown'. Maybe he talked too much—or drank too much. Anyway, when he reached his chamber he must have realized the Hanoverians had put a cordon about the place. He tried to make a jump for it from the window and fell twenty feet. Before he could pick himself up they shot him like a dog."

"He's dead?" demanded Beaufort.

"Yes, Your Grace." Westmorland looked at Lord Primrose. "Did he carry papers on him, incriminating documents?"

"Not a word," protested Primrose quickly.

"That's all for the better. He was going to see the Prince on the subject of French support? We don't want that sort of news to reach the Hanoverians."

There was a murmur of agreement. "What's our best strategy?" asked Lord Graham. "What do you think, Tony?"

"We must lie low," said Westmorland. "Prince Charles must hold his hand until he hears from us. We'll leave these Whig hounds to their baying at the moon."

A silence fell. Lord Primrose was ill at ease. The Duke of Beaufort was glowering. Lord Graham was biting his lip and Sir Charles Cochrane fiddled endlessly with a pounce-pot which stood on the table in front of him.

"Poor Sharpe," said Lord Primrose laconically. "He was a good fellow, and the fourth of them to go that way."

Westmorland shrugged his shoulders. "The position of being Lord Primrose's courier does not appear to promise expectation of long life. That isn't all."

"Is there something else?" enquired Lord Primrose with obvious anxiety.

"The Archbishop of Canterbury has received instructions to inhibit Doctor Arnold King from his living at St. Mary's, Ightham. Lord Cooper rode down with instructions from Mr. Pelham himself. He saw the Primate this morning."

"How do you know that?" asked the Duke of Beaufort.

Lord Westmorland winked knowingly. "Because chaplains are impetuous people and the rule of the Church of England permits their entrance into the holy estate of matrimony. The chaplain to His Grace of Canterbury is little loth to put a few Jacobite guineas in his pocket." He paused to see the effect of his words. "It's true enough, Your Grace," he said pointedly to Beaufort, who was inclined to doubt the information. "Cooper's horse

shed a shoe near Bromley, otherwise he'd have reached London before me. I saw him cursing his guts out at the smithy door."

"William Cooper?" said Sir Charles Cochrane slowly, and raised his eyebrows.

"Yes," faltered Lord Primrose. "As a matter of fact, he is coming here tonight to the party my wife is giving."

A gasp of astonishment went round the table. "You'd ask Cooper here?" demanded Beaufort. "Why, man, you might as well invite the devil."

Primrose saw the ominous expression on their faces. "If you would let me explain, my lords——"

"Certainly," said Beaufort caustically. "Heavens! We'd like an explanation."

Primrose drew a long breath and looked thoroughly unhappy.

"At our last conference we decided upon the necessity of throwing sand into the eyes of the opposition. The whole future of the Prince's aspirations and of the Stuart Cause depends on keeping them unsuspecting. Therefore, my wife and I have hit upon a plan. Lord Cooper has declared to me his wish to pay his respects to my daughter."

"The Lady Angela!" said Lord Graham tersely. "That's a damned dangerous business. Better to nurture a serpent to your bosom than a Whig."

There was a titter of laughter, but Lord Westmorland was impatient. "Well," he said, "let's hear this plan."

"My wife and I thought it better not to discourage this suit," said Lord Primrose apologetically. "After all, we felt we could prevent it from becoming serious and, at the same time, if we permit the Whig Solicitor-General to nourish hopes, a great deal of suspicion might be assuaged. Personally, I can see no harm in it."

"But what of Angela? What does she say?" asked Lord Graham, who was young and had a romantic streak in him.

"Up to the moment Angela knows nothing of this matter, but I am sure her sentiments are the same as ours. If put to it, she would risk anything and everything to bring back the rightful heir to the British throne."

"I'll be damned!" exclaimed Lord Westmorland, and helped himself liberally to snuff. He offered the box to Sir Charles Cochrane, who refused.

The Duke of Beaufort rose to his feet, and walked slowly across to the french window. He stood there gazing out, deep in thought, and pushing his fingers up beneath the curls of his wig in a near attempt at scratching his head. Suddenly he turned and faced the table again.

"Primrose—all of you—listen to me. We are talking side-tracks. His Royal Highness will do nothing until he hears from us. Should he receive French aid, we have his promise that we shall be informed before he makes a definite move?"

Lord Primrose nodded emphatically. "We have the Royal word on that."

"Good!" said His Grace. "There matters must be left. If we send another message to him, the chances are the courier will be intercepted. Dead men tell no tales. Let's hope Sharpe died easily. My lords, do we keep quiet and await developments?"

There was a chorus of assent.

"Very well," said the Duke of Beaufort. "Then that is agreed. There must be no foolhardy repetitions of the Risings of the 'Fifteen and the 'Forty-Five. If and when we rise our advantage is in surprising Hanover and his Whigs." He stooped to take up his cane and hat from a chair, and the other gentlemen, save Lord Primrose, followed suit.

"Is there anything more that we should discuss?" asked Lord Graham.

Sir Charles Cochrane shook his head. "Nothing, my lords, save I would add a rider that perhaps it would be better if we were to leave quietly and by means of Lord Primrose's garden gate."

Lord Westmorland laughed sarcastically. "Why, certainly!" he agreed. "It would do Lady Angela's prospects no good if such well-known Jacobites were to collide with her father's Whiggish guests."

"I resent that remark," said Lord Primrose with some show of spirit.

"Then readily I withdraw it, my lord," said Lord Westmorland with accentuated charm.

In a body they walked to the french windows, where Lord Primrose let them out.

"*Au revoir*, Your Grace—my lords. No doubt we shall meet again—and soon."

The Duke of Beaufort shrugged. "Who knows? Perhaps in His Majesty's Tower of London. Maybe on Tower Hill? Caution, my Lord Primrose—the watchword is caution!"

Lord Westmorland interrupted. "Doctor Arnold King will come straight here. Let us all know the moment he arrives, that is important, my lord."

"Of course, of course," agreed Lord Primrose readily.

"And, meanwhile," said His Grace thoughtfully, "we'll try our best to keep our heads safely on our shoulders. We can think so much clearer that way."

The Duke of Beaufort, the Lord Westmorland and Graham and Sir Charles Cochrane filed through the french windows and out into the garden. Lord Primrose stood motionless as he watched their departure. He saw them make their way across the lawn and reach the garden gate. Here, the Duke of Beaufort waved his hand and waited whilst the others passed through. Only when he saw the gate shut again and his visitors had passed out of sight did Lord Primrose's tension relax. He searched in his pocket, produced a fine cambric handkerchief and dabbed the beads of perspiration from his forehead.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SPIDER SPINS HIS WEB

AFTER the Jacobite leaders had gone, Arthur, Earl of Primrose, sat for a long while in his high-backed chair at the head of the study table. He tried again and again to regroup his thoughts, to set them in order and to arrive



at some form of a coherent assessment of what had taken place. He had come into this 'Jacobite business', as he was wont to describe it, through the influence of his wife, for Mary was a forthright lady with the blood of the impetuous Ruthvens in her veins. She was a Jacobite to the heart's core. Her King was James III and her Prince Charles Edward Stuart. It was more by good luck than good management that the Primroses had escaped being embroiled in the Rising of the 'Forty-five. In point of fact, both of them had been visiting their relations, the Earl of Jersey and his lady, when the rebellion broke out, and, therefore, being in the Channel Islands and without transport, they were unable to return to England until the whole unfortunate business was over. Nevertheless, Primrose had been an object of suspicion for the Whigs, and it was only a great deal of adroitness on the part of himself, her ladyship and his lawyer that had saved his good name and estates intact.

To Primrose's way of thinking, such a providential escape would have been enough for any man or woman, but Mary's loyalty and devotion to the Stuart cause knew no limits. No sooner had Bonnie Prince Charlie reached France than she was the first to make contact with him and to set in motion plans for a further attempt to seize the throne.

Primrose had never said 'No' to his wife since the day he married her, and now he found himself equally unable either to argue her into reasonableness or to save himself from being drawn into this net of Jacobite intrigue. This, for a cautious man, was an unpleasant position, and his situation was even more poignantly impressed upon him every time he went to see Mr. Shortt, his lawyer, for Mr. Shortt had his office in St. Paul's Churchyard, and to reach the establishment Primrose had to pass beneath the Temple Bar upon which, stuck on pikes, mouldered the heads of the Jacobite lords, Lovat, Balmerino and Kilmarnock. As he had remarked to his lady, 'But for the grace of God there go I'; which, though it was a plagiarism and a *cliché*, amply described his feelings on the matter.

Lord Primrose fiddled with a quill pen, put it back in its stand, and sighed. Events had moved quickly, much more quickly than he liked, and now the fact that yet another courier of his had died in violent circumstances made matters none the easier. He did not feel any particular personal sorrow for this fellow Jasper Sharpe, a good and loyal servant, a gentleman by birth, but, after all, he had undertaken to do a duty and was well paid for it. He had come into this business open-eyed and died in it. His lordship was rather glad that Sharpe had died so suddenly, for though torture of any sort was forbidden by the statutes of England, the Dragoons and Hessian levies were not at all squeamish as to the methods they used to extract confessions from suspects.

Lord Primrose rose to his feet and walked across to a long cheval mirror. He pulled down the flaps of his flowered waistcoat, set his cravat to his satisfaction and tugged the lapels of his coat.

Yes, he thought, he was growing old. There were no two ways about that, and when a man grew old he was entitled to a little peace, both political and domestic, and it seemed that if Mary had her way he was not going to have much of either. There was the sound of footsteps in the corridor, the

whispered, subdued tones of servants, and the clink of glasses, cutlery and crockery. Another reception tonight! Lord Primrose frowned. He wished that Mary would agree that the house should be shut up and they could disappear to their country seat in Lowland Scotland and thereby be outside all chance of political embroilment. His lordship sighed deeply. There was nothing for it, he must go upstairs, find Mary and tell her exactly what had happened. Moreover, there was this Cooper business to talk about. He had a considerable affection for his daughter Angela. After all, she was their only child, but at the same time a matrimonial alliance between the Tory house of Primrose and the Whig house of Cooper might be very convenient. Cooper had power, both with the Pelham administration and at St. James's Palace. He could hardly think that the fellow would let his father-in-law go to the block on Tower Hill. Or, again—for the Coopers were of commercial origin—would he permit the broad acres of Primrose to be rived away when he, through his wife's title, might be the heir-presumptive?

These thoughts relieved Lord Primrose's gloom to a considerable degree. He walked moodily to the door, turned the handle and passed into the passage. Boulter appeared as if from nowhere and bowed. In answer to a query the major-domo stated that her ladyship was upstairs. He had reason to believe she was in her room and gowning for the evening.

His lordship blew his cheeks and spoke his thoughts aloud. The older a woman grew, the longer it took her to powder and paint herself. Mutton done up as lamb! Mutton done up as lamb!

Boulter bowed, affecting not to hear, and watched his lordship move slowly along the passage and into the Great Hall. Here Lord Primrose paused and stood looking with some apprehension at a portrait which had been newly placed above the massive fireplace. He regarded the picture closely. The painting was by Daullé, a French artist of considerable repute, but it was not the merit of the work that interested him, it was the subject which astonished. The portrait was of H.R.H. Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

"Damn!" muttered Primrose. "Madness! Tomfoolery! Idiocy!"

Boulter came surreptitiously to his side. "The portrait, my lord, was placed there by the orders of her ladyship. It was put there this very afternoon whilst your lordship was in conference." He hesitated and cleared his throat. "The position for the portrait was chosen by her ladyship herself. The painting of your lordship's mother which had previously hung there, sir, has been removed to the drawing-room."

Lord Primrose frowned. He didn't care much where his mother's likeness had gone. That was a matter of little importance; she had been a garrulous woman, and now, as the grave had closed over her, he supposed that she would be garrulous no more. But this portrait of the Prince hung up in his own hall where everybody could see it at a moment such as this! When a host of guests of all colours of political opinion were expected! Words failed Lord Primrose utterly, and he could not even swear to relieve his feelings. He turned and stamped away to reach the foot of the staircase and go slowly up the polished stairs, his cane tapping out his annoyance as he climbed.

Half-way up the stairs he paused and turned to take another look at the portrait of the Young Pretender. He swept his eyes away from it and took in the fine lines of the hall, the cases of weapons, swords, rapiers, muskets, duelling pistols, armour and the like. The Primroses had ever been a warlike people; the present Lord Primrose wished fervently that they had been less bellicose, things would have been so much easier if tact instead of bravery had been exercised as a family characteristic.

After a moment he continued to climb, reached the landing and turned away towards the Balcony Room which was Mary's bed-chamber.

He had to knock twice at the door before any reply was forthcoming and when the door did open the features of Spence, Lady Primrose's tire-maid, appeared.

"Oh, your lordship," she bumbled, and over her shoulder: "It's his lordship, my lady."

What Lady Primrose said in reply was muffled and incoherent.

"I desire to see her ladyship at once," commanded Lord Primrose, and without waiting for further bidding, pushed his way into the enormous bedroom which was almost sparsely furnished with satinwood French furniture. Candles were burning everywhere and the heat was tremendous. Lord Primrose gasped and gazed about him.

"Where is her ladyship?" he demanded.

Spence twittered and bobbed a curtsy.

"May it please your lordship, her ladyship is in the powder cupboard."

The door of the powder cupboard was thrown open and Lady Primrose appeared, whilst behind her stood the wig-woman, Mrs. Blossom, a thin angular creature who was obviously apprehensive at the sudden appearance of the earl.

No woman looks her best in a powder cupboard, and she probably looks her worst at the moment when she emerges from it. Lady Primrose was robed over her hoops and stays with a shapeless silk mantle of the palest blue, but this was completely scattered with chalk and potato flour so that it gave a mottled appearance. As she walked forward rivulets of powder fell from this garment and spattered upon the priceless carpet. Her ladyship's face was not made up. She was without her patches and colouring and her whole complexion was suffused with the chalk-like powder which had been intended for her hair. Moreover, the wicker frame over which her hair was to be dressed was only partially set in place and Mrs. Blossom had only had time to get a certain amount of hair drawn over it and pinned. Therefore, instead of effecting the motif of a ship in full sail, the result was reminiscent of a vessel almost completely wrecked.

"Arthur!" stormed Lady Primrose. "What in heaven's name brings you here at this moment? Haven't I told you a thousand times that there are moments when a woman needs privacy—absolute privacy—even from her husband?"

"My dear, I know," protested Primrose.

"Well, what is it?" snapped his wife, and she saw the expression on his face. He obviously did not wish to speak in front of her tire-women. She

made a quick gesture with her hand. "Get out," she ordered, "the pair of you."

The two women curtsied and disappeared.

Lady Primrose composed herself to listen. The death of the courier was unfortunate, but Sharpe had been well schooled, he would have had no papers on him, and dead men tell no tales. But all the same, it was disconcerting. She frowned a little when Arthur stated that he had come to the conclusion that they should encourage Lord Cooper's suit with Angela. He started to explain the pros and cons, but obviously Mary was not listening to him. At last he came to the end of his rignmarole and gasped for breath.

"So that's your reason for bursting in on me at this inopportune moment," she demanded.

Lord Primrose wilted. "Is it not reason enough, my dear? What can we do? We must do something."

Lady Primrose's eyes grew hard. "Arthur," she said, "listen to me. We will give our heart, our soul, our lives, everything to the restoration of the Stuarts, to this throne which has been usurped from them."

"But, my dear," began Primrose.

She made an impatient gesture with her hands, forgetting the incongruity of her appearance. "Don't argue, Arthur. Either we shall achieve this together or I must work by myself. Do you wish me to tell the Duke of Beaufort and the others that you have turned craven?"

Primrose had no answer to this. He feared his wife's scorn even more than he did the edge of the headsman's axe.

Lady Primrose crossed to her dressing-table and sat down before it. She removed the worst of the hair powder from her face, rouged herself and reddened her lips. Then she started upon her eyes, with mascara and kohl; despite the condition of her head-dress, she now felt more herself with her make-up in place. She rose majestically to her feet. Yes, she agreed, this Cooper business wasn't a bad idea provided they watched it carefully and did not go too far or too quickly. Angela was only a child and still in her teens. She wrinkled her brow and made a decision.

"Very well, Arthur, leave it to me. I was pondering how I should dress Angela tonight. I know she is a little young, but needs must when the devil drives. Angela must make a beginning sometime. She can cease being a girl and become a woman tonight."

There was an air of complete finality in Mary's voice and Arthur Primrose eyed her regretfully. It was so like his wife to seize upon the crux of the situation, to declare impetuously what was best to be done and, having decided, utterly failed to take him into her confidence.

"What are you waiting for, Arthur? Leave Angela to me," she cried pettishly. "She's as loyal to the Stuart Cause as either you or I. If she plays Cooper off and gains us time, she's done a service. Now, please leave me. I must dress."

She wafted him towards the door and he retreated resentfully. The moment he had gone she called for Spence and Mrs. Blossom. No time must be lost and her toilet would be continued forthwith. She hurried into the powder cupboard, dragging Mrs. Blossom after her, and then from behind

the closed door she called out instructions—rather muffled instructions—to Spence, who, because she was old in the Primrose service and somewhat hard of hearing, had the greatest difficulty in understanding her clearly. The paramount instruction was that the tire-maid should proceed without delay to the Lady Angela's bed-chamber and there find either the Lady Angela or her maid, Evans. She was to say that all preparations for the Lady Angela's toilet were to be held up until her ladyship could personally supervise them.

Only a month ago Lady Primrose had brought her daughter to London from their Scots Lowland Estates at Moniaive. Here almost from birth Angela had been brought up under the kindly eye of the Lady Flora Primrose, her father's sister. Lady Primrose, like so many women of her station and period, lived for Society, excitement and mild flirtations.

For eighteen years Lady Primrose had led a section of Society. She had watched it increase from being little or nothing until it became London's fashion. She was more than content with what she had achieved, and though the Rising of the 'Forty-five, with its disastrous finale for the Jacobite cause had clipped her wings not a little, five years was long enough for many disloyalties to be forgotten, so now, in 1750, she was back at her old tricks and extravagances with a vengeance. Fortunate for her was it that the Primrose Rent Roll was one of the finest in the realm, and that Arthur and she had been paying that timely visit to the Channel Islands when the rising broke forth in all its fury. For had they been in England Mary would have played an active part on the Stuart side, dragging Arthur after her, so even if his head had remained on his shoulders certainly his broad acres would have gone forfeit to King George's crown. For the Hanovers had a nice eye to business when they punished those who had declared for the Pretender.

Lady Primrose, after the quietus which the 'Forty-five had imposed upon her, returned to her old mode of life, but with the dawning of the year 1750 there had been a difference. She had suddenly fixed her thoughts upon her daughter Angela—still hidden in the fastnesses of Scotland's Moniaive, from whence letters coming periodically told of the increasing charm and beauty of the girl. They pointed out her cleverness at her school books, with her needle and in polite conversation. Governesses and 'dour schoolies' reported enthusiastically of what they had taught the girl, and the Lady Flora passed on these reports, adding her own eulogies.

The Primroses learnt to their satisfaction that their only child had all the makings of a great lady. She possessed a knowledge of the more fashionable musical instruments, she could sing a fair song fairly and recite a poem with a pretty manner and nice delivery. Also she had read her history and had a little Latin and less Greek, and a passing acquaintance of the classics. She could ride a horse hard and straight, throw a fly to entice any trout to meet its doom, and fire a fowling piece with considerable directness.

Furnished with all this inspiring information about their offspring, Mary decided and Arthur concurred. Their daughter should be brought to London; Angela must take her place at their side and in Society.

Lady Primrose had sighed a little after the decision had been reached.

To suddenly have to produce into the midst of her admiring circle a daughter of eighteen summers was a blow. Mary's friends declared she was not yet thirty, and challenged anyone to give a greater age to her youthful loveliness. Her enemies—and she had a few—gave her thirty-five years at the most. The arrival of Angela would discount both friend and foe alike, so she made up her mind to confound all critics and from the moment of the Lady Angela's arrival to admit to being a lovely forty summers. This was a great sacrifice on her ladyship's part.

Angela therefore had come southwards from Moniaive. A great journey in those troublous days. Her father had come North to view his estates, and brought her back with him—this a journey of near upon four hundred miles made over the worst possible roads and tracks, and often through dangerous and troubled country. They had made the journey entirely on horseback, and with an armed escort of a dozen men, besides the faithful Jean Evans, who later declared in the servants' hall of the Essex Street mansion that whilst the Lady Angela had never turned a hair over the whole miserable, plodding journey, for herself, there wasn't a square inch of her ample bottom that wasn't a ripening blister.

When the Lady Angela came to London she brought from Moniaive two companions of her former life. The first was this Jean Evans, her tiremaid, a buxom devoted young woman and the daughter of a former butler of the Primrose *ménage*, whose mother had been given the pensioner position as housekeeper at Moniaive Hall. The second was her horse Champion. He was the joy and pride of her life, and she had told her father without compromise that she would not go to London without Champion. As arguments were of no avail, and Lord Primrose was no man for altercation, he had given in. The great seventeen-hand roan had borne Angela like a feather the entire way, and whilst all other members of the party had changed horses a dozen times his strength had never faltered. Now he had his special loose-box in the Essex Street stables, and despite maternal disapproval Angela stole every possible moment to be with him, either on his back galloping the parks and lanes—to the astonishment of the Londoners—or feeding and tending him in the stables—to the amazement of his lordship's grooms and stable-lads.

. . . . .

In the Blue Room, which was Lady Angela's bed-chamber and her own special domain, Angela Primrose gazed moodily at the small Paris clock which ticked incessantly upon the mantel-shelf. She was a very pretty girl. In fact, with a little more maturity of features she could readily have been described as a beauty. She was tall, slimly and supple made and of that fair complexion which proclaimed a Saxon ancestry. Her eyes were large and blue and naturally dark-lashed. Her features were regular and her lips full and generous. But there was a firmness of chin which showed that she had a mind and a will of her own.

The only other occupant of the room was Evans, and she, with nothing to do, was standing in the corner of the room and somewhat uncomfortably

changing her weight from one foot to the other. When she was not looking at her young mistress she cast her eyes downward upon a youthful muslin party frock, decked out with blue ribbons, which was spread upon the ottoman, or at the low-heeled white satin shoes which were neatly placed beneath.

Lady Angela was wearing a dressing-gown of brocade, but on the back of a chair lay a heavy green velvet riding habit which she had recently taken off.

"But what did my mother say?" she asked, repeating the same question which she had demanded a dozen times before. "Look at the time, Evans, I shall be ever so late. The guests will be arriving at any moment."

Evans sighed and wished fervently she had placed her aching feet in more comfortable shoes. Her young mistress, to whom she was entirely devoted, had a directness of questioning which was truly disconcerting.

"It's like this, my lady," she began hopelessly. "You being down at the stables and giving tit-bits to Champion, I didn't know rightly what to say. You see, I'd laid out your party frock and made everything nice and ready for you to slip into, when in comes Spence. She says she has a message from her ladyship and asks where you was."

"You didn't tell her?"

Evans reassured quickly. "Not a word, Lady Angela. And seeing the rumpus there was the last time her ladyship heard you was down at the stables all alone with the grooms, so to speak, and petting that horse of yours, I thought to myself—as the saying goes—least said is soonest mended."

Angela twisted her mouth wryly.

Evans sighed. "I said as how you weren't in your room for the moment, as she could see for herself, but I thought you would be back any minute."

"Did Spence say anything more? I mean, was she satisfied?"

"She must have been," said Evans. "Though, my lady, it's hard to make out what's going on in the back of Spence's mind. She just stands looking round this room of yours and then tells me not to do anything in the way of dressing you for tonight until instructions come from her ladyship."

Angela looked at her party frock upon the ottoman and then towards Evans. This was all rather amazing. She wondered if some misdemeanour on her part had been discovered and for that reason her mother would forbid her going to the party that evening. She rather hoped she would. Her mother's parties did not interest her very much. There was so much froth and bubble, flattery and insincere talk, everybody seemed to be acting a part in a play and not to be real live beings.

"I wouldn't worry yourself too much, my lady," said Evans reassuringly. "You couldn't do anything that was really wrong, not in your whole life."

Before Angela could answer she caught the sound of shoes tapping upon the polished flooring of the corridor outside. There was a knock on the door and it opened to admit the angular Spence. She stood in the doorway and gave a little bob-like curtsy.

"Her ladyship wishes to see you immediately in her bedroom, my lady."

"To see me immediately? What does her ladyship want, Spence?"

Spence's face was like a mask. "Her ladyship didn't inform me, my lady. She said you were to come at once."

"Like this? Undressed?" asked Angela, fingering the edges of her dressing-gown and pulling it closer about her.

"Yes, my lady. It was particularly mentioned you should come just as you are."

Spence opened the door for Angela to pass and turned to look back at Evans, who was making tracks to follow her.

"We'll not be needing you, Evans," she said sharply. "And if we do we've got tongues in our heads to ask for you."

"Very good," said Evans, flushing crimson.

Angela made her way down the corridor from the Blue Room to her mother's bedroom. She tapped nervously at the door and Lady Primrose bade her enter. She lifted the latch and stepped into the room.

Lady Primrose was now in her full war-paint and certainly she was an imposing and lovely spectacle. Her powdered hair was now in complete coiffure and was after the style of a ship in full sail and ornamented with little flags in precious stones which gave the idea of signals. Her face was heavily *maquillaged* and artistically patched, whilst a cluster of jewels partially covered the naked space between her throat and her low-cut corsage. She was so tightly laced that she could hardly breathe, and the frock she wore was a many-pannied confection of flowered satin over which lace was festooned into knots, and the hems of the skirts were held on oval hoops and looped up on either side to disclose a cascade of frilled petticoats beneath which showed high-heeled pink satin shoes made after the French style.

As Angela entered Lady Primrose was in the act of drawing on long kid gloves and she made a little expressive gesture of her hands to acknowledge the curtsy of her daughter.

"Shut the door, Spence," she ordered.

"You sent for me, Mother?" asked Angela.

"Yes, yes," said Lady Primrose. She made a sign for Mrs. Blossom and Spence to withdraw. "Angela," she said quietly, "something has happened which makes it essential for us to placate the Earl of Cooper."

"Lord Cooper, Mama?"

Lady Primrose sighed. "Yes, my dear. A little while ago he came to your father and asked permission to pay his respects to you. No, please don't interrupt me. At that time we were uncertain, but circumstances have changed."

"Changed, Mama? Surely Lord Cooper has not become a Tory and a Jacobite?"

Mary Primrose frowned. "This is the last moment, Angela, when you should be flippant. A very serious situation is likely to arise, if it has not arisen already. I will give you one inkling. Your father's courier, Sharpe, has been killed by King George's men on his way to France. This is extremely dangerous and therefore we need a friend at Court."

Angela caught her breath. "You mean that you want me to marry Lord Cooper? But, Mama, I scarcely know him, and when a woman marries a man it's for ever and a day, isn't it?"



"I have not mentioned marriage," snapped Lady Primrose. "All I say is this, that Lord Cooper is likely to pay his respects to you, and it is your father's wish and mine that you should accept them. There is a long way to go between an engagement and a marriage. And also remember that you have a duty to your parents, and your own lot would be an extremely unfortunate one should your father be indicted for treason."

"Treason?" stammered Angela.

Lady Primrose nodded. "You heard what I said. It is not my habit to mince words, my dear. I am asking you to help us."

"Of course, Mama. But William Cooper?"

Lady Primrose tapped her foot impatiently. "Angela, this is not the moment to argue. Please come into the middle of the room and stand there, yes, right in the middle under the candelabra."

Lady Primrose watched her daughter take up the position she had indicated. She clapped her hands peremptorily and Spence and Mrs. Blossom came forward.

"Slip off that wrap, Angela," she ordered.

For an instant Angela demurred. "Mama, I didn't know—I mean, I have nothing on underneath."

"Don't be so stupid," said Lady Primrose. "You had nothing on when you were born and you were much closer to me then than you are now."

Angela took off her dressing-gown unwillingly and stood, overcome with embarrassment. Lady Primrose examined her daughter thoughtfully. "Good shoulders, a little flat in the breast, but that will rectify itself. Your waist, dear, far too flabby. It's those silly childish frocks your Aunt Flora has been allowing you to wear. Good hips, and nice straight legs. Please don't think me too hypercritical. You are a very beautiful girl, but this is the transition stage. We are going to make a lovely woman out of a beautiful child. Aren't we, Spence?"

"Why, certainly, my lady," agreed Spence.

"Then stop gaping," snapped her ladyship. "And give Lady Angela her wrap."

Spence brought the garment, which Angela swathed gratefully about her body.

"Blossom," said Lady Primrose, "Lady Angela will wear powder tonight."

"Powder!" cried Angela. "But, Mama, you promised I should not have to powder until I really came out."

Lady Primrose cut short this expostulation. "You are coming out tonight, Angela, and I will have no nonsense. If you behave like an unwhipped brat I'll make a whipped one of you." She turned to talk details with Mrs. Blossom. The Lady Angela could wear the small frame. That would suit her youth better, and blue ribbons and flowers, no jewels, in her hair when the coiffure was finished.

"Petticoats," said Lady Primrose. "Spence, fetch the garments that I have chosen, and stays. It is a good thing that Lady Angela and I are almost of a size. Stockings and garters, white silk, and those high-heeled white

brocade shoes. They are too large for me, Angela, and if they are a little too small for you, they will make you walk more primly."

Spence disappeared into a dress closet and came back with a heap of petticoats, stockings, shoes and on top of them a pair of new French stays. Angela was again relieved of her wrap and the first of the garments put over her head, and made secure about her waist. Spence brought a little stool, sat her down upon it and helped her into her shoes and stockings. The shoes did not pinch too badly.

"Now the corsets," said Lady Primrose, and these were fitted and carefully laced. "Can't you go a little tighter, Spence?" she demanded. "She looks more like a sack of potatoes than a daughter of mine."

Spence pulled at the stay laces until Angela thought that the last ounce of breath had been driven out of her body.

"That's better," said Lady Primrose. "You are more like your mother now, my dear."

"I feel like nothing on earth," gasped Angela, and realized the moment she had spoken how unfortunate was her remark.

Mrs. Blossom appeared at the door of the powder cupboard. "If your ladyship pleases, I am ready for the Lady Angela."

"Very good, Blossom," said Lady Primrose. "Hurry along, Angela, there's no time to waste."

Angela gave a last crestfallen glance at her natural self in the mirror of the dressing-table.

"Very well, Mama," she said obediently.

### CHAPTER THREE

"THE ENGAGEMENT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED . . ."

THE Countess of Primrose made a departure from the ordinary civilities of a hostess where her entertainments were concerned. She allowed her guests to arrive first, and herself made a spectacular appearance down the great staircase at the right psychological moment. She did not do this with any idea of incivility, but it was only another pin-prick at the House of Hanover. Thereby lay a story, for Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, the wife of Frederick Prince of Wales, had started the innovation. Her idea was that any German 'baby royalty' was far superior to the British nobility, and thereby she sought to keep the arrogant British blue blood in its place. When Lady Primrose heard of this strange behaviour at York House she had immediately arranged counter-measures. If a Saxe-Gotha could ask her guests to wait upon her, then a Primrose could do the same thing, and she took good care that the gossips should have the story and convey it to the right quarter.

So, at Primrose House, Essex Street, the coaches and the sedan chairs

arrived at the appointed time, but the receiving of the guests was left to the Earl of Primrose, ably abetted by the unflurried Boulter. Certainly the guests did not seem to mind; they took it all in good part. Lady Primrose, even if she was eccentric, carried out her eccentricities in a witty way, and for the most part they liked being a party to this poke at the haughty Teuton. Besides, there was plenty to amuse them. In the Card Room tables were set out for faro, and piquet, and to these the gamblers, headed by the notorious Earl of Sandwich, immediately made their way. This section of the guests needed no entertaining, and before long cards were being dealt out and money and bills passing backwards and forwards across the tables.

For those who did not like the game there was music in the conservatory. Here a French Huguenot band, led by the fashionable Maître Papillon, played the latest and most seductive airs of the France from which their faith had exiled them. Papillon, a tall aristocratic man with all the manner and charm of a maestro, had a great following amongst the ladies of Society, and here for the most part they congregated.

Besides listening to the music, there was gossip in plenty, and not a little laughter and exchange of good stories. My Lady Westmorland, rotund, petite redhead, complained bitterly that her husband had not come that night.

"Has he lost his heart?" asked the Viscountess Morpeth.

Lady Westmorland grimaced. "No, my dear," she whispered, "but he is trying hard to lose his head."

For the gentlemen there was always the buffet, and here such well-known toppers as Sir Geoffrey Lade, Sir George White and my Lord Haddington immediately made their way and restarted the delightful operation of getting themselves completely sodden in the shortest possible space of time. Here they were joined by such stalwarts as the Earl of Devon and Lord Cornwallis, who discussed in no uncertain terms their profound opinion that that devil Henry Pelham and his 'Broad Bottom' Administration were indubitably running the country to the dogs.

Lord Cooper had not yet put in an appearance, but already such notorious gossips as Horace Walpole and his crony General Sir Eyre Coote were tittle-tattling and bandying his name about. Rumour had it that he was coming often to the Primrose *ménage* and the name of Lady Angela was mentioned, though Horace Walpole considered she was far too young to realize she was the centre of attraction. Sir Eyre Coote, on the other hand, having had long experience of India, suggested that if a woman had been brought up in the country amidst horses and dogs and rabbits and suchlike, she'd know what was in the air.

The subject changed: Walpole had a nice piece of spice to tell. Had the General heard that young Sir Guy Stanley was setting his cap at Mrs. Bette Hilton, of Mr. David Garrick's Company at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane? But that was not all: young Sir Guy was so infatuated that he had persuaded his aunt and hostess, Lady Primrose, to allow Mrs. Hilton to come that very night and demonstrate her power of dramatic art by giving a recitation from her repertoire.

Sir Eyre Coote groaned and said somewhat caustically that he hoped the

Primrose supply of claret would not run out, as he had to be in the arms of Bacchus before he could enjoy to the fullest the charms of Melpomene. Some of those standing by caught this sally and tittered. This was unfortunate, for the remark was made in the Great Hall and at that psychological moment Boulter threw open the outer doors and announced :

“The Right Honourable the Earl of Cooper, Sir Guy Stanley, Mrs. Bette Hilton.”

Their entrance came right upon the amusement which was being had at their expense, and Lord Primrose, going forward quickly, was only partially able to allay the look of suspicion which had come into Cooper's face. On the other hand, young Sir Guy Stanley was too rapt in his adoration of the charming Bette to care a jot for anything save her. He continued to ogle at her, while she remained entirely oblivious of this protracted worship.

The ladies of Society gazed a little askance at Mrs. Hilton. They were not quite certain how to accept a play actress into their midst, even if she had come under a professional engagement. But Mrs. Hilton was quite ready for and impervious to their sour looks. She knew that she was a reigning beauty and the toast of the coffee-houses and clubs from one end of St. James's to the other. This was to be something of an ordeal, but she had made up her mind to face it out, and her toilette was in harmony with these brazen sentiments.

Bette Hilton affected the French mode of dress, which was generally adopted by the British *haut monde*. Her hair was powdered, for such was essential, but she did not wear it lifted into the enormous head-dresses of German and Dutch inspiration. Instead the style was low-crowned, heavily goffered and held with a black silk bow at the nape of her neck. To make up for this compactness she wore a large black hat of framed lace, which was pinned at such an alarming angle on the left side of her head as to form a species of halo, and almost completely screened off that side of her face.

About her throat Mrs. Hilton wore the black velvet tie, made famous by Madame de Pompadour, and this was secured by a diamond clasp set with fine stones. Her gown was a magnificent confection of white with a black net overlay, which carried strips of black velvet stitched on so as to give a dramatic striped effect. The waist was secured to incredible tightness, while the bodice was cut so low as barely to conceal her pouting breasts. But in direct contrast the sleeves were full and reached, heavily *ruched*, to the wrists, where they were secured by black velvet ties similar to that which she wore at her throat.

Bette's skirts were not tight-hooped as in the German-Dutch style, but though held out on the hips and voluminous they had a draped effect, which gave some lie to the symmetry of the female form beneath. The material was of the same black and white overlay against a white background as the bodice and sleeves, but here the French modiste had worked on the cross, and achieved a circular motif which gave a statuesque inspiration.

Mrs. Hilton, sensing the antagonistic glances of the ladies congregated about her, gave back as good as she received. These great ladies might think and look as they pleased, but nothing they could do would alter the established fact that she was leading lady at the Lane and the toast of every blood worthy

of his name. She flicked her fan, smiled to show her perfect teeth set in heavily carmined lips, and treated the Earl of Primrose to a bewitching smile.

Sir Guy Stanley, seeing the embarrassment of his uncle-in-law, came to the rescue.

"Mrs. Hilton is to entertain us with a performance this evening, sir," he said impulsively.

Lord Primrose glowered. He was far from sure that this entrance of Mrs. Hilton was in keeping with his wife's intentions. And as for the 'performance this evening', he'd eat his hat if she wasn't right at that very moment putting up one of the performances of her life.

"The beauty of the English language," gushed Bette, "the power of speech . . . of elocution. Words can move mountains, and conquer nations. . . ." She continued to enlarge upon the magnificence of the spoken word.

Lady Sefton, standing elegant and bored on the edge of the throng, whispered cattily to her neighbour Mrs. Marjoriebanks: "My dear, her father is a butcher in the Nottingham Market; they say his command of the English language is unrivalled. He has never been known to repeat himself."

Mrs. Hilton had now turned to the subject of William Shakespeare, and it was hard to discover from the eulogy which had brought the greater boon to the English language, the Immortal Bard who had written the lines—or the actors and actresses who spoke them.

Old Sir William Eaton whispered hoarsely into the ear of *Son Excellence Le Duc de Nivernais*, the French Ambassador at the Court of St. James: "Monsieur, they say William Hogarth is painting her in the nude."

The French Ambassador nodded his head. "That is—how do you say—correct, Sir William." He laughed. "*Quel jeu!* Monseigneur she takes down her petticoats for the sake of posterity. She pulls them up again for the sake of prosperity."

Sir William guffawed so loudly that everyone turned quickly to gaze at him in surprise. "That's a good one, Your Grace. The brush and palette of Hogarth for the first, eh? And the broad acres and rent-roll of young Guy Stanley for the second?" He chuckled. "Good luck to her, I say."

Bette Hilton could not fail to hear the sally. She tossed her head. Sir Guy was flushed and angry, and Lord Primrose appeared more uncomfortable than ever. The guests had started to titter, some of them even to laugh.

"Guy," she said plaintively, "a little wine for the stomach's sake." Her confidence was coming back. She smiled bewitchingly at Lord Primrose. "If you will permit us, sir?"

She moved away on Guy's arm, her skirts rustling elegantly. As she reached the side of the *Duc de Nivernais* she lisped naughtily: "Monseigneur, your Madame la Pompadour and poor little me have something in common."

Nivernais bowed. "Madame, what can that be?"

"Why," said Bette in a brazen whisper which all could hear, "neither Madame nor I deny our lovely bodies to the poor painters in the sacred cause of art."

Mrs. Hilton had turned the laugh away from her. Sir William Eaton, thick-skinned roué that he was, looked almost uncomfortable.

The French Ambassador fondled his pointed beard. "She is a clever woman . . . she turns the ripost into the victory."

Sir William pursed his lips. "The riposte into the victory, Your Excellency. That reminds me of something I wanted to ask you. This talk of the King over the water? They say that Madame la Pompadour is interested once again about a charming young prince who wishes to regain a throne?"

*Le Duc de Nivernais* countered quickly. "Ah, monsieur, I thought you would ask me about *Son Altesse le Prince de Conti*. But I must not be indiscreet. He fervently wishes for the return of the throne of Poland and the help of the King of France. But, alas, this Polish business is always difficult, and Madame la Pompadour is a cautious woman. Even though Frederick the Great may lampoon her she does not let her anger carry her too far." He sighed. "You see, Sir William, it is all very difficult, this game of chess we play. There are too many kings on the board."

Lord Cooper had moved close enough to overhear the conversation of Nivernais and Eaton. He interrupted with studied affability. "Your Excellency, I hope you will pardon my joining your discussion. What a sad state of affairs it is—so many kings and so few crowns." He smiled thoughtfully. "I think Your Excellency will agree that those kings who have crowns on their heads would be well advised to keep them firmly there."

Lord Primrose, who had seen what was happening, grew apprehensive. Nivernais was a clever devil, but all the same he did not relish a prospective son-in-law who was so obviously an agent of the Whig Camp. He felt the path ahead was filled with pitfalls.

Monsieur Papillon brought his orchestra into action once more and started to play a lively tune with great verve. The tension of the happenings of a moment before relaxed. The guests began their harmless gossip again. All for the moment was well. Laughter—sometimes a little extravagant and false—rippled and vied in volume with M. Papillon's G string.

Some of the ladies were whispering together, and even above M. Papillon's music William Cooper could catch familiar names. "Lady Angela Primrose." . . . "My dear, Mary is so clever." "An engagement? Tut! Tut!" "A Primrose and a Cooper united in holy matrimony? Arthur's ancestors will turn in their graves! God bless my soul!"

So that was how the wind set? William shrugged his elegant shoulders. He certainly did not mind what these discredited Tories had to say. Mr. Pelham's financial machinations had produced such a favourable budget for the current year that the whole country was astonished at the Chancellor of the Exchequer's revelation of its wealth. The Tories could say what they liked—this new commercially-minded Britain would not quarrel with King George's Golden Horsemen and the Whigs who had been responsible for this phenomenal increase of national prosperity. He felt rather proud of being a Whig, and a law officer of the Crown. It was pleasant to air himself amidst this hotbed of Jacobite intrigue and blue-blood Toryism.

He bowed charmingly to the elderly Lady Sefton, who scarcely broke off her conversation to acknowledge his salute and crossed to where the harassed Lord Primrose was standing.

"Why, sir," greeted William Cooper, "surely Monsieur Papillon is treating us to a Jacobite tune?" He laughed. "Dear, dear, and almost in earshot of St. James's and Westminster!"

Arthur Primrose gulped. "William, my dear fellow. Jacobite, did you say? You must have a better ear for music than I have." He tried to laugh the situation off. "My dear wife arranges everything, and she is so efficient I dare not interfere."

"Everything, sir?" Cooper had taken out his eye-glass and was elegantly holding it to his eye. "Everything? Lady Primrose must be a very busy woman. Tell me, sir, does she also arrange the pictures which decorate the walls? Or is that a pertinent question?"

Primrose followed the line of William's gaze. He saw it was fixed upon the newly hung portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender. He thought furiously of something he might say to explain this curious situation and found inspiration was sadly lacking.

William Cooper realized exactly what was taking place and changed the subject to his own advantage. "Your daughter, Lord Primrose? I do sincerely trust you have mentioned the subject to her, that I have asked the honour to pay her my respects——"

Primrose did not allow him to finish. "Of course, William, my dear fellow. Of course. Angela is a little young, but youth is a malady for which there is always a cure and never a relapse. Angela will be most happy."

Lord Cooper ceased to examine the Stuart portrait and let fall his eye-glass. "And where is Lady Primrose and the charming Angela?" he asked pointedly. "I see many stars, but we lack the lustre of the sun and moon."

"Yes, yes," agreed Lord Primrose, and cast his eyes towards the great staircase down which he knew his wife and daughter must appear.

Many years of married life had taught Arthur that his wife was nothing if not dramatic. She had a finely developed sense of timing, which if a trifle theatrical was certainly effective. He realized that the long-expected moment had at last arrived. A footman appeared and went surreptitiously to Boulter's side. The two men exchanged a whispered conversation and the footman withdrew to impart a message to M. Papillon, whose music immediately became pianissimo. Boulter came pompously to Primrose's side and bowed.

"My Lord, My Lady and the Lady Angela are about to descend."

Lord Cooper caught the remark and preened himself; he shot the laces of his cuffs and adjusted the set of his brocade coat. Lord Primrose walked to the foot of the great staircase and prepared to make his well-rehearsed announcement.

"My lords, ladies and gentlemen, my wife and daughter are about to join us."

The pomposity of the situation was ridiculous, but that was the way Lady Primrose wished it to be done. The announcing words were a facsimile of those used by Her Royal Highness at York House. Those in the know smiled and exchanged meaning glances. The Princess of Wales would doubtless hear of this copying of her methods; they wondered how the Saxe-Gotha mentality would react.

High-heeled shoes were tapping upon the super-polished boarding of the balcony and above the banisters white-powdered hair, dressed high and decorated with ribbons, flowers and brilliants, was nodding above the banisters.

Lady Primrose reached the top of the great staircase and waited for an instant for Angela to come up with her.

"Come, my dear," she ordered, "hold your body rigid and your chin high."

"Yes, Mama," whispered Angela unhappily, her strait-laced body giving a constant reminder of Mrs. Blossom's and Spence's ability in corseting her to the requirements of fashion. Her head-dress felt enormous, and her hair seemed as if it had been nearly dragged out by the roots by Mrs. Blossom's efforts to secure it to the frame. She wondered if she dare smile, for her lips were sticky with carmine, and her cheeks and throat felt enamelled into a cast. As she stood for that instant looking down at the throng of her parents' guests Angela felt no excitement. Rather her mind went back to the Great House at Moniaive and the blueing grandeur of the distant Cheviots. The clear, whispering waters of the Shinnel and Scar Waters, where the brown trout lay. She remembered the constant though dour kindnesses of Aunt Flora and the stolid teachings of Mr. Armstrong, the grizzled dominie. Those had been simple days amidst the glories of natural beauty. Her parents had brought her away from that and now were launching her into Society. This was the legacy of her birth and breeding, but she hated her lot and the sudden change which had been forced upon her. Her mother had promised the change should be gradual, but in an instant all her old world was swept away and she stood there—an artificial flower—which it was her lot to become. When such a short while ago her mother had brought her to her bed-chamber and directed that she should be stripped naked the past had been laid away by the symbolic gesture of her nudity. Ahead lay an artificial future, trammelled with powder, paint, laces, silks, satins and make-believe.

Lady Primrose's voice cut acidly across her reverie.

"Angela, whatever is the matter with you? You're standing there like a hobbledohoy. Child, everyone is looking at us. All eyes are upon you. Smile back at them—be gracious."

She took Angela's tightly gloved hand into hers. "We are about to descend," she intimated sharply.

Angela forced a smile upon her lips. They started down the stairway and she caught the subdued murmur of voices, expectant and critical. Her eyes took in this gathering of High Society and swept on to fix themselves upon her father. Poor man, he looked so ill at ease. Yes, and next to him stood the Earl of Cooper, very assured of his immaculate self, his eyes fixed upon her with a stare which seemed to bore through the very clothes she wore. Her high-heeled shoes, already pinching, slithered on the super-polished surface of the stairs. She very nearly slipped, but recovered her balance with an effort. Lady Primrose gripped her daughter's hand so tightly that her nails, despite their gloves, all but cut into its flesh. Angela's smile broadened and became more natural. She realized an increasing desire to burst into peals of uncontrolled laughter. As if cued in to fit the incongruity



of the situation M. Papillon changed his music to start playing the Jacobite ballad: 'Oh, my darling, Oh, my darling, Oh, my darling Clementine'.

The guests at Primrose House realized nothing of Lady Angela's feelings. All eyes were now turned to the staircase, and the entrances which led to the Card Room, to the buffet and to the drawing-room were now crowded by those who wished to be present to greet their hostess. They watched the descent down the staircase and men and women alike were impressed by the elegance of the sight they saw. The Countess of Primrose was always svelte, a pretty woman, perfectly preserved and magnificently groomed. In her they saw what they expected. Mary Primrose had led her section of Society long enough to have made a niche for herself, and this, by the arrogance of her creations, she occupied without challenge. Therefore the interest for once was not for the mother but centred upon the daughter. Many of Mary's friends had seen Angela when she first arrived in London. To them she had been a pretty girl not quite out of her puppy fat, with a predilection to shapeless frocks and broad ribbons. Now they marvelled at the transformation. Out of this raw material a 'Watteau Princess' had been created. They admired the perfection of the framed coiffure, the neatness with which the powder had been laid on. What had been a girlish complexion was now a triumph of strawberry and cream *maquillage*. They appraised the manner in which an unrestrained figure was now poured into all the accentuated curves of the Fashion. They took in the low-cut lines of the bodice and the masses of pastel-shaded silk and lace which was festooned over hoops to form the skirt.

Lady Primrose and Angela reached the level of the Hall. Her ladyship curtsied low to her guests.

"May I present my daughter, the Lady Angela Primrose?" she said, and still holding Angela's hand raised her from her curtsy.

There were polite murmurs on the part of the guests, some of these interspersed with more definite remarks. "*Comme elle est charmante*," murmured the French Ambassador, and Sir William Eaton made a somewhat unguarded remark about being 'the finest filly he had seen that season'. General Coote and Horace Walpole were twittering together and what they said was highly complimentary to the charms of the Lady Angela.

Lady Sefton was the first to compliment Mary upon her daughter, whilst the Countess Westmorland vowed that she had worked wonders and, having a somewhat podgy daughter of her own, wondered aloud how she could contrive a similarly taking ensemble.

Angela was left alone, the centre of all eyes, but without anyone personally to talk to her. Lord Primrose had joined with his wife to accept the congratulations to which he felt he had a rightful share, though very few seemed to think he had any dealings in the matter at all.

Lord Cooper saw his opportunity and walked quietly to her side.

"My dear Angela, what a transformation!" he said condescendingly. "The country bumpkin of yesterday has become the Society lady of today."

Angela bridled. "I can assure you, Lord Cooper, the transformation has been even more rapid than that. Two hours ago I was my natural self, and now——"

He finished the phrase for her. ". . . You are your more than charming second self. I find myself almost intoxicated."

Angela wondered what she should say, but before she could speak again Boulter had appeared and announced that supper was served. Her ladyship gave her arm to the *Duc de Nivernais* and Lord Primrose to the Lady Sefton, and everyone trooped into the white drawing-room to eat, to drink and to chatter to their hearts' content. Whilst the musicians of Monsieur Papillon played a pot-pourri of melodies guaranteed to help digestion and increase vivacity.

Angela had heard enough in her mother's bed-chamber to realize that it was intended that Lord Cooper should be her partner for supper. She found him attentive, inordinately pleased with himself, and somewhat dull if not discussing his own prowess in some departure or another. She looked around for other amusement and discovered her youthful cousin Sir Guy Stanley was sitting immediately opposite.

"Angela," greeted Guy. "How utterly charming you look!" He turned to present the arrogant-looking beauty who sat beside him.

"May I present Mrs. Bette Hilton of the Lane?" he asked. "Mrs. Hilton has promised to entertain us with some recitations and excerpts from her plays immediately supper is over."

Bette Hilton looked towards Angela and smiled. "Yes, Lady Angela," she lisped. "The labourer is worthy of his hire—or her hire, in this case. Because I feed with the quality it is hoped that the quality of my performance will be improved." Very brazenly she winked across the table.

Angela smiled back at her. She felt she rather liked this Mrs. Hilton, and it was her first contact with a play actress.

"It must be wonderful," she said, "to play so many roles and live in them, and to work with the great David Garrick." She made a little moue expression with her mouth. "The ordinary mortal is born one person and remains that person throughout life. An actress is so different. She can be a hundred people all rolled into one and live the experiences of a hundred lives."

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Sir Guy. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings! Angela, where did you learn all this?"

Angela laughed. "Why, Guy, my dominie Armstrong used to teach me at Moniaive. I remember his words well. It was how he described the Greek theatre to me."

"A good Presbyterian, by his name," grunted William Cooper, looking up from his plate. "Though he might like the Greek theatre, I wager he has little use for the modern one. What do you say, Bette?"

Bette fiddled with her fork. "That I am grieved not to be able to rely upon Dominie Armstrong for the price of a seat. However . . ." She smiled brilliantly. "Guy has promised to buy me a theatre of my very own. He says he is so jealous he intends to be the only audience and I am to give my performance entirely for his edification."

"Is that right, Guy?" asked Angela naively.

Guy Stanley blushed crimson. "In so many words—in so many words,"

he said quickly, trying to dismiss a declaration which he obviously did not mean to be repeated.

Angela laughed at his discomfiture. But if William Cooper was inclined to be a bit of a bore, the trio remained light-hearted and their conversation carried no malice. She discovered herself talking freely and happily with Mrs. Hilton and bringing William into the conversation when he allowed himself to be interested. She forgot the strangeness of her surroundings and her toilette. She grew vivacious and found herself matching repartee with so tried a person as the actress and teasing Cousin Guy for his too apparent adoration.

At the head of the table Lady Primrose was not entirely enjoying her daughter's intimate conversation with the divine Hilton. She felt that her nephew had rather tricked her over the whole matter. The first idea had been that Mrs. Hilton should come as an entertainer, but now she was an accepted guest. Her ladyship wondered just what her friends were going to say about all this. Arthur should have put his foot down. She looked sceptically at her husband, who was nervously talking pleasantries with Lady Sefton. The trouble with Arthur was he could never put his foot down about anything. She sighed and turning to Lady Westmorland made the best of a bad job. She declared that she thought it was most fortunate to have been able to bring Mrs. Hilton to her party that night. After all, Bette Hilton was a great name, and this was a transitional period when personal endeavour had begun to count more than hereditary right. She was delighted that Angela and Mrs. Hilton seemed attracted to each other. She dropped her voice. Did dear Elizabeth know that Mrs. Hilton was giving verse-reading lessons to none other than the Princess of Wales? She thought the example was an excellent one and she had planned that Angela should receive similar instructions and from the same instructress.

"Why, Mary," said Elizabeth Westmorland caustically. "Times are changing, as you say. Fancy you following the example of York House in anything!"

The conversation languished and Lady Primrose, feeling snubbed, registered a vow that she would have it out in no uncertain terms with her nephew on the first practical opportunity.

Supper came to an end. There was a good deal of laughter, exchange of witticisms and scandal. Society was enjoying itself and Lady Primrose began to forget her ill-humour. But soon the guests wished to be at other diversions and amusements. Lord Sandwich and his cronies longed to be back at the card tables. The affianced and the newly-weds had heard that the gardens were open and illuminated, and they wished ostensibly to take the air and admire the flowers by artificial light, or perhaps actually to have a little privacy for their own and personal amusement. The elders wanted to gossip and the toppers to go back to their toping.

Lady Primrose did not intend them to have entirely their own way whilst they were guests in her house. She had suffered Bette Hilton quite enough and she intended, willy-nilly, that they should also suffer her. She rose and made the announcement. Mrs. Bette Hilton had come to give them a selection of her choicest pieces, the performance was to take place in the

Cream Ballroom and she hoped—no, she commanded—that everyone would form the audience.

The Earl of Sandwich began to grumble, but Lady Primrose went to him and laid a fluttering hand upon his sleeve. "My dear," she cooed, "if you have any quarrel, have it out with my dear nephew, Guy Stanley. He arranged all this." She let her eyes travel to where William, Guy, Bette and Angela were standing together, and obviously enjoying one another's society.

Lord Sandwich followed her glance. "Why, Mary," he laughed. "These Whigs pride themselves on being broad-minded, and it looks to me as if you will have to take a leaf out of their book, at least where so pretty a woman is concerned."

Mary left Sandwich with a toss of her head and went off to the Cream Ballroom, there to bully Boulter and see that everything was in readiness for Mrs. Hilton's performance.

Mrs. Bette Hilton performed with considerable skill. She began with Shakespeare and gave a spirited interpretation with excerpts of *Rosalind from As You Like It*. This was received with ecstasy by Sir Guy Stanley and with polite applause from the rest of the audience. She was a competent performer with a strong clear voice of excellent quality. Moreover, as far as the men were concerned, she was a singularly fine figure of a woman with a roguish way about her which brought a new vigour even to the most elderly and blasé roué. For her next piece Bette continued in the Shakespearean vein, and chose *The Taming of the Shrew*, playing the part of Katharine with such outbursts of sexy vigour as to make Lord Sandwich declare at the top of his voice that she was 'Better tonic than a hand of cards any day,' a remark which brought the severest frown from Lady Sefton and a deprecating cough from Mrs. Marjoriebanks.

*The Taming of the Shrew* was a greater success than the first recitation. Perhaps the ladies saw in Mrs. Hilton's performance a true interpretation of her own character and felt some satisfaction from it. The gentlemen, on the other hand, became more than interested in the combination of such grace and beauty with so lively a spirit. The applause was quite astonishing in its volume.

Lady Primrose consoled herself by almost thinking that her sour grapes had miraculously turned into a most sweet and succulent variety.

For her third recitation Bette chose the French language and extracts from Molière's *Psyche*. She spoke her lines charmingly with a surprising knowledge of the French language and intonation.

"*Pauvres amants, leur amour dure encore,  
Tout morts qu'ils sont, l'un et l'autre m'adore.  
Moi ! dont la durèté reçut si mal leurs vœux,  
Tu n'en fais pas ainsi, toi' qui seul m'a raïe,  
Amant, qui j'aime encore, cent fois plus que ma vie.*"

With Molière Mrs. Bette Hilton finished her performance, receiving an ovation and coming forward on the little raised platform which served as

the stage to take half a dozen bows. But she obviously felt that to perform again would be to outstay her welcome, and despite the cries of 'Encore', which were more masculine than feminine, she only returned to curtsy low, to smile and regretfully to shake her head.

M. Papillon saw that Mrs. Hilton would not perform again and struck up his music. He had a reputation of sensing an awkward moment and having a tune to ease every situation.

Lady Westmorland sniffed. "I think the French piece at the end was a little much," she confided to Lady Primrose. "Of course, she did it to impress and to remind us all that she has been to Paris."

Lady Sefton joined in, smiling sweetly. "She didn't tell us of the circumstances of her visit to Paris, my dears. I feel those would have been far more interesting than any recitation she could give us."

Lady Primrose pursed her lips. "Let us be charitable. Isn't it wonderful to think that a butcher's daughter could even speak French, no matter how she learnt it?"

The *Duc de Nivernais* rushed in where angels feared to tread. "Madame," he greeted Lady Primrose. "*Comme elle est superbe, cette Hilton*," he gushed. "How do you say, I could close my eyes and think I was in Paris—yes, in Paris."

"With her?" said Lady Westmorland cattishly.

The *Duc de Nivernais* shrugged his shoulders expressively. "*Et pourquoi non ?*" he answered naively, and went hurrying off to find a place at the card tables.

A host of footmen appeared under the redoubtable Boulter to clear away the chairs and to make ready for impromptu dancing for those who cared for such diversions.

Guy Stanley had hurried to congratulate the adored Hilton on her prowess and Angela found herself left with William Cooper.

"Most unfortunate," he was grumbling. "Whatever made Bette Hilton choose the French language I do not know. The French are our natural enemies. Louis XV and his Pompadour seek to overthrow our King and have continuously plotted against him." He looked almost savagely at Angela. "Do you know that the Young Pretender is at Flushing, that he waits there to gather his forces for another bid to capture the British Crown? The Tories and the Jacobites think that we Whigs are asleep, but let them beware—we cracked our whip and brought the curs to heel in 1715 and again in 1745; experience should teach them that we shall do it again."

Angela's expression changed from amazement to anger.

"How dare you speak to me like this, my lord! Do you accuse me or do you mean me to carry your words to my friends?"

Cooper saw that he had blundered. His demeanour altered. "Lady Angela, I am sorry. In the heat of the moment I let my tongue run away with me. Please believe the sincerity of what I say. Yours is a Tory household, your mother and your father make no disguise of their Jacobite sympathies, they refuse the advice of one so affectionately inclined towards them. They do not realize their danger."

Angela pursed her lips. "Are you the one so affectionately inclined towards them?"

Cooper smiled. His assurance was coming back. "Why, yes, Angela. Is not my affection pledged by the very fact that I have asked your father's leave to pay my attentions to you?"

"Indeed?" parried Angela. "I had already received a warning as to your intentions, my lord."

"A warning?" pleaded Cooper. "Surely that is an ill-chosen word?"

"You did not let me finish," she said evenly. "I would have said that as you have received permission to pay court to me, so have I received instructions to encourage your suit."

Cooper winced. Angela was so cold and self-possessed. He flattered himself as being a handsome man and irresistible to women and yet here was this chit of a girl showing no personal inclination towards his proposal.

"Is it necessary," he asked, "that we should talk here in such a public place with our words echoing throughout the length and breadth of an empty ballroom? Surely this is a more intimate moment?"

Angela shrugged her shoulders. She suggested that the sheltered terrace of the garden might be suitable. She felt quite sure that there would be a sufficient privacy if Lord Cooper had anything to say of such a secret nature.

Cooper jumped at the suggestion and together they left the ballroom and turned away down the short passage which led out on to the shelter terrace. A rustic seat, carefully cushioned, was near by, and Cooper handed Angela into it. He stood waiting for an invitation to sit down next to her, but this was not forthcoming. She sat very stiff and straight, her chin tilted upwards, looking at him.

The gardens had been tastefully lighted and, as the night was still, the candle-lanterns gave a steady, sufficient light to help a half-moon and a starry sky. A few couples were walking and talking amidst the flower-beds and upon the lawns, either admiring the novelty of the illuminations or each other.

Angela waited a moment. William Cooper showed no inclination to start the conversation. He appeared to have relapsed into moody contemplation. "Lord Cooper," she challenged, "are you a poor advocate where your own pleading is concerned?"

"I must weigh the pros and cons. I have much to lose."

She looked squarely at him. "Have I so much to gain?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Protection, Angela, is a very sacred word. The name of Cooper means much in Whig influence. Let us say that we both have much to lose and likewise much to gain."

"Very well, I accept your valuation," she said calmly.

Cooper studied his finger-nails thoughtfully. He raised his eyes again and looked towards her with the same searching, denuding glance he had used before. She felt resentful and antagonistic.

He started to speak very slowly, choosing his words. "Angela, you are very beautiful. Before, I wondered whether the elfish girl, fresh from Scotland, could be moulded to suit me as my wife, but now I am certain. Your mother has started the work and I know that I can continue with it to

my own satisfaction. You are young, Angela, you have been brought up with different ideals, politics and loyalties from mine, but youth is on your side. You can learn my ways and forget this Jacobite foolishness."

"I see," said Angela. She used his Christian name for the first time. "So this, William, is a proposal of marriage. Surely there has never been a stranger one. You have never spoken of love, of adoration; all you have done is carefully to weigh up the pros and cons, to sum up as if you were both judge and jury and give your verdict. Do you think this is the way to lay siege to a girl's heart? Is this the method to propose that we enter upon the state of marriage and all it means?"

William Cooper caught his breath. "Do you refuse me, Angela?" he asked sharply.

She shook her head. "No, William, I accept you, for I have no other alternative. You have made everything so plain. If I accept you, my father will keep his head on his shoulders. Is that not so? If I refuse you, the chances are his head will sooner or later be piked upon the Temple Bar. I have learnt the method and the doggedness of you lawyers. No, William, I accept you, as I am the last person to be consulted, and everybody is agreed what is best. Then I must bow to the will of the majority."

Cooper was entirely amazed. Angela's acceptance of his proposal came so quiet-voiced and yet so definitely that he knew the fullness of his empty conquest. He had achieved what he wanted and yet this prospect of the ultimate inheritance of the broad acres of Primrose was an empty victory.

Angela rose to her feet and stood smiling calmly at him. "If you wish, William, you may kiss my hand. I suppose under the circumstances you may kiss my cheek." She turned her face sideways towards him and he pecked it dutifully. She shivered ever so slightly. "It is growing rather cold and I have no wrap. Would you mind if we went indoors?"

"But certainly, Angela," agreed Cooper, and his tone of voice had become almost meek.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A YOUNG MAN OF NO CONSEQUENCE

THE little parish church of St. Mary's, Ightham, in the County of Kent, was set amidst the orchards. In fact, the fruit trees encroached almost into the churchyard itself and made a memorial with their sea of multi-coloured blossom for the souls of the departed. As the yokels said over their pots of beer and cider, Ightham was a good place to live in and likewise a good place to die in. That was, leastways, if you wanted peace.

All was peaceful about the village green and in the village itself, and save for a few geese and ducks which waddled and quacked about the pond, and a handful of sheep and cows which grazed upon the stints of the green, and

a rooster and a hen or two, not to forget a rooting pig or so, there was hardly a living creature to be seen. The day of the week was Friday, and all the good villagers had gone to church, for Doctor Arnold King, late Principal of St. Mary's Hall, Oxford, and now Vicar of St. Mary's, Ightham, looked upon a Friday as near holy a day as Sunday and expected—nay, demanded—full attendance of his flock.

On this day of each week, and carrying out the Act for Uniformity of Common Prayer as laid down (*Primo Elizabethae*), Doctor King always said the Litany, and he expected his flock, no matter what their business, to congregate at the church. Fridays, for the people of Ightham, were well-chosen for this purpose. There were no markets or fairs held on that day in the neighbouring towns, nor were there many other reasons for taking a man or woman away from the village.

The Saxons had built the foundations of St. Mary's Church. Then had come the Normans to add their pointed arches, and the handiwork of successive sovereigns from Edward VI to Good Queen Anne was to be noticed in the architecture of this heterogeneous building, but ivy clothed its walls and creepers and lichen softened such architectural contrasts. The stones quarried at different ages from the self-same quarries mellowed and grew alike in hue. St. Mary's had known the Carmelites, the lay orders of Rome, Henry VIII's Protestant Clergy, the Anglo-Catholics of the first Stuarts, and the Puritans of Cromwell. King James II's quasi-Catholics had said Mass within its walls, and in turn given way to political opinion and Queen Anne's low churchmen. But though the method had changed with successive political influences St. Mary's Church had remained the spiritual centre of the Ightham community, for the good monks of Canterbury had not built their House of God on sand.

Whilst outside the sun was shining and transforming all and everything into a spring-time fairyland, the interior of the church was cool and sombre, but here and there shafts of sunlight streamed through the stained-glass windows and threw pools of coloured light upon the flagged nave.

Doctor King, in cassock and surplice, his priest's stole about his neck and his Oxford University Doctor of Divinity's hood—a brilliant splash of red—hanging from his back, stood with his back to the altar. He faced his congregation, his parson's prayer-book in his hand, and read the Litany.

"Both now and ever vouchsafe to hear us, O Christ."

The congregation murmured the response.

"Graciously hear us, O Christ; graciously hear us, O Lord Christ."

Doctor King read again. "O Lord, let thy mercy be shewed upon us."

"As we do put our trust in Thee," returned the worshippers.

Doctor King sighed. The Litany was at an end.

"Let us pray," he intoned. First he recited the Prayer for Mercy in Infirmities and waited to hear the 'Amen'. He spoke the Prayer of St. Chrysostom.

"Amen," murmured his congregation.

Doctor King began to say the Benediction.

"The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us evermore."



"Amen," said the villagers, and this time with more fervour than before. They had not noticed the tremble in their priest's voice. For them the spiritual was over and they could become material again. They had done their service before the Face of the Lord, and, thus strengthened, they would return to their common round.

The door at the west end of the church was thrown open and the villagers filed out. Once outside the walls they started to talk and chatter, the deep tones of the men and the shriller voices of the women mingling in their Kentish burr.

Doctor King stood looking after them, his prayer-book still open in his hands. He was lost in a reverie and his face was drawn with a passing sadness. The priest's interest quickened. The church was not empty; in one of the rearmost pews a worshipper still sat, his head bowed forward as if in a continued attitude of prayer.

Doctor King came down the steps from the altar. He moved silently down the aisle, and unsuspected by the young man who sat in that pew he came quietly up with him.

"Julian . . . Julian Brett."

The young man lifted his head. "Why, Doctor! Sir, I'm sorry." He rose to his feet and smiled sheepishly. "The Litany, sir. . . . I'm afraid I drowsed a little. Spring . . . perhaps it is the pollen. Doesn't that make you sleepy?"

"Sssssh," whispered Doctor King. "You have come to church. You have heard the service, taken part in it. Let us leave the matter at that. Surely it is all I want to know?"

There was a thud as a red-bound book slithered from beneath its cover of a volume of Common Prayer and fell upon the pew-boards. Julian Brett, with a guilty look, made an attempt to stoop, but before he could do so Doctor King had leant down with surprising quickness and taken up the book.

"Sir Walter Raleigh?" he read slowly. "*The Last Fight of the Revenge*?"

Julian Brett's fair, good-looking face flushed scarlet. "It's about Sir Richard Grenville, sir—and that wonderful fight he put up with the little ship *Revenge* against a whole Armada of Spaniards."

Doctor King looked sharply at him. "Julian, do you come to church to read of war? What place has war in this House of Peace?"

Julian Brett refused to be admonished so easily. "But, sir," he protested, "I found this book in your very own library shelves at the rectory. You told me that I might go there and choose, if ever I wanted anything to read."

"Young man, you're incorrigible. When will you realize there is a time and place for everything? Does it not strike you as blasphemous to mix the supplication of the Litany with flame and bloodshed of the *Revenge*?"

Julian had his answer ready, but the doctor with a gesture of his surpliced arm withstrained him.

"Julian, please go into the vestry and wait for me. No, don't worry about the book, that is a matter for your conscience. You can't persuade yourself what you've done is right. There is something else I must speak to you about. . . ."

Julian looked curiously at the clergyman. In the many years they had known each other this was surely the most imperative phrase he had ever known him to use. Something very unusual must have occurred—or be about to occur—for him to speak in such a manner. The doctor moved slowly up the aisle and bent his knee in High Church reverence to the altar. Here he took up a long-handled snuffer and extinguished the altar candles one after another, beginning first with the left, moving to the right and last of all putting out the highest and greatest candle which stood in the centre.

Until this duty had been performed Julian remained motionless. His eyes were fixed upon Doctor King and he felt a great and fathomless affection towards him. He admired the fine features, the strong mouth and chin, the classic profile, and the steady wide-placed eyes with their heavy lashes and brows.

Julian Brett found himself comparing his own lithe body, his tallness and broadness of shoulder, with the aesthetic build of the doctor. The latter had grey eyes and Julian's were brown. Doctor King's natural hair, now grey, had once been black—a raven, almost Spanish, black—whilst Julian's hair was a rich brown, flecked with auburn. Their noses were different. Julian had nothing of the Roman contour about his face. His features, in contrast to those of the doctor, were of the Celtic type. Julian was a young giant and Doctor King, even before ageing years had brought a stoop, was a man of slight stature.

Yet there was a mystery and the gossips talked. They whispered that Julian Brett was the son of the Reverend Doctor Arnold King, otherwise with comparison to the meanness of their own natures they could not understand the unending kindness of the clergyman to a foundling boy.

These doubts were often in Julian's mind. Why was his name Brett—or Julian, for that matter? There were no people with such names in Ightham nor in the Maidstone neighbourhood. Who was he? How had he come to Ightham? Why had he been brought to Kent? Julian had asked himself these self-same questions a thousand times and more, but now as ever there was no solution.

Doctor King was still busy at the altar. He was tending the flowers in the vases and adding fresh water. There were prayer-books and bibles to be marked, closed and put away, the altar cloth must be straightened and half a dozen other little tasks had to be performed. The doctor would always do these himself; he allowed no layman, or woman, to pass beyond the altar rails, save the aged Ethel Tyler, who scrubbed and cleaned.

Julian watched and saw that the doctor's tasks were nearly finished, and with a shrug of his shoulders he walked down the church and turned away to the door which opened into the vestry.

Arrived here he settled himself in a half-sitting position on the edge of the oak table and thoughtfully contemplated a top-booted leg as he slowly swung it to and fro.

A tall mirror which stood in the corner of the vestry caught his eye and attracted his attention. He admired the reflection of himself. The brown home-spun suit he wore suited his colouring, also the coat was well cut and the breeches nicely fitting. His flowered waistcoat and yellow stock had

individuality. His new black riding boots were polished to perfection and the vertical striped tops gave a gay contrast.

"The smartest yeoman in Kent," said Julian to himself. He pulled a face. He did not like to consider himself a yeoman. There were limitations of toilet and dress which a yeoman's status permitted. He wanted to be a great gentleman, to wear a powdered wig of the latest style, perhaps a dress sword of an evening, and to assume ruffles of lace, and the silks, satins, velvets and brocades of High Society.

He slipped to his feet and crossed to the mirror for a more intimate examination of himself. He liked the style of his hair, drawn long to the nape of his neck and secured with a black bow to allow the ends to fall upon his shoulders. This gave a wig effect and a touch of grandeur. Good eyes, a strong chin? Yes; he wondered if his mouth and lips were a trifle sensuous. What matter? That was a good fault if ever there was one. A haughty look? Why, yes, he had a haughty look, and he had studied and practised that look so often and so well that it had become a part of his demeanour. He puffed out his chest and braced his shoulders. Six foot odd of perfect manhood and twenty-five years of age. Was all this to be withered and wasted on the high stools of Bailiff Broad, who managed the affairs of Ightham in the interests of the absent Cornwallis landlords? Surely he was meant for a better future?

The thought annoyed him and he glowered angrily at his reflection. Peaceful—peace! How he hated those words! Doctor King might chide him because he thought and read of war and strife, but men of condition such as he could only prosper by the sword. War and the Sword alone could lift the lowly to fresh and exalted positions. Better be successful and great or be killed in the endeavour. That was his motto; he would be ruthless, he would turn all and everything to serve and promote his ambitions.

Doctor King came so quietly into the vestry that Julian did not realize his arrival. The doctor watched this display of self-admiration and a smile touched the corners of his mouth.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these," quoted Doctor King.

Julian turned quickly at the sound of the voice. "You haven't asked me to come here to make fun of me?"

The doctor shook his head. "Of course not, Julian; the passage was apt and so I quoted it." He took off his full-buttoned wig, showing the close-cropped grizzled hair beneath. Next he removed the stole and pectoral cross. The surplice he pulled off over his head, and he started to unbutton his cassock. A moment later he stood revealed in his waistcoat and breeches. Julian brought his coat and held it up. The doctor slipped his arms into the sleeves, shot his cuffs and straightened his clerical ties. This done, he began systematically to fold up his surplice, stole, cassock and vestments and to pack them carefully into a blue cloth brief-bag which lay upon the vestry table. Once the vestments were carefully stowed away he took up one by one his hymnal, missal, testaments and Book of Common Prayer.

Julian's interest increased. "You did not tell me, sir, that you are taking duty elsewhere."

Doctor King shook his head. He busied himself tying the strings at the mouth of the brief-bag. He hesitated.

"Julian," he said at last, "I have been wondering how I am to explain this situation to you. It is very hard to find words and to forget bitterness."

"Bitterness, sir?"

"My boy, since the very first it has always been my wish that you should not dabble in politics. The political aspects of this realm have many pitfalls and bring a host of punishments to the weaker and more loyal adherents."

"You speak in riddles, Doctor. Cannot we be plain and to the point? If you are leaving St. Mary's, surely there is some paramount reason? The whole of Ightham declares they have never had a better preacher, a sincerer parson, nor a holier man in this cure of souls."

Doctor King shrugged his shoulders. "What the people of Ightham think is not necessarily what King George II of Hanover and England, and his Whig advisers, feel in the matter. I have never deceived anybody in my views. I am a High Churchman. I believe in the Divine Right of Kings, and therefore my loyalty must always remain with the dethroned Stuarts. When His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury allowed my appointment to this living, I made no secret of my views. He knew that I was a Jacobite and that I had refused to take the Oath of the Allegiance to the Hanoverian Usurpers."

"Surely, sir, these are strong words!"

"No stronger than I feel. Listen to me, Julian. When I was at St. Mary's Hall, Oxford, I did not cloak my views. As I was in Holy Orders I could not take up the sword in defence of the Stuarts' righteous claims. I placed my tongue and my pen at their service."

Julian fidgeted. "But to what loss, sir? The Hanoverians hounded you from St. Mary's Hall and it was only through your college friendship with Doctor Herring, the Archbishop of Canterbury, that you obtained this living. Surely, sir, you are not going to allow them to persecute you again?"

Doctor King stroked his chin thoughtfully. "You pride yourself on being a materialist, young man, but may I remind you of the thousands of Christians who have suffered persecution for the sake of what they knew was right. I have been informed by friends of mine that a warrant has already been issued at the request of Mr. Pelham's administration, that I should be inhibited from this living. It is only a matter of hours, perhaps of moments, before the ejection will be carried out."

"But cannot Doctor Herring save you, sir?" asked Julian.

Doctor King sighed. "Poor Herring, how could he save me? He is a thing of the Whigs, their creature, and what St. James's wishes he must hasten to carry out. Don't let us discuss the Christianity of Doctor Herring, it is too painful. Let me talk of myself for a little while. Julian, I know that they would wish me to quit St. Mary's before their coming. They would like an empty conquest; the Chancellor of the Diocese and the Under-Sheriff of the County would prefer to report that the old bird had flown."

Julian voiced his protest. "Yes, Doctor, all this I understand. It is your loyal way of doing everything, but surely there is a difference. Before

Prince Charles Edward came back in the year 1745 hopes were held high that he would regain the throne of his ancestors, that his father would reign with the title of James III, but all this is dashed to the ground. How can the Stuarts return after the drubbing they received at Culloden and the persecutions of the Butcher Cumberland? The Cause is lost."

Doctor King shook his head emphatically. "Julian, a cause is never lost whilst right is on its side."

"Then will the Prince return?"

Doctor King smiled. "I will say nothing. Why should I make you share such dangerous confidences?" His smile broadened. "You who are a declared materialist, who serve only yourself and your own interests."

Julian winced. "But I also serve you, sir. My debt to you is greater than anything else in the world."

"And I will never ask you to pay that debt, Julian. I have many good friends and they will look after me. My plans are well made, and the moment I am ejected from this living I shall go at once to powerful friends of mine in London. The Earl of Primrose has offered me the hospitality of his roof."

Julian repeated the name after him. "The Earl of Primrose—London. He is a great gentleman, this Earl of Primrose? I have read of him in the broadsheets." He pursed his lips. "London . . . that's a great city. And it is only in great cities that men can achieve a greatness for themselves. Dick Whittington found fame and fortune there." He continued to speak his thoughts aloud, wondering whether the streets of London were really paved with gold, trying to assess what might lay in store for a person such as he. "I should like to serve Lord Primrose," he said suddenly. "That would be a great opportunity. Do you think he would have a position for a young man such as I? I would do anything, provided there were prospects—definite and encouraging prospects."

"The materialist," said Doctor King. "Again the materialist. What prospect would there be for you to accompany a poor old inhibited clergyman?"

"If you needed me, sir . . ." Julian stopped short. "Perhaps Lord Primrose also has need of a young and trustworthy fellow."

"Yes," said Doctor King, "I had thought of that, and for that very reason I wrote to his lordship some little time past. However, the reply was unfortunate. I will not bother you with it. The position of factor to his lordship was already filled by a young gentleman named Sharpe. There was no other vacancy."

"I see," said Julian, and his face fell. But quickly he smiled again. "It would be against my creed to risk the job I hold for some speculative appointment? Is that what you mean, sir?"

"Perhaps," said Doctor King. "Julian, I love you very much. You have brought a great deal of enjoyment to me. Though I am an Anglican, I took the oath of celibacy as many High Churchmen do, and in a youthful enthusiasm for my faith I did not realize I had denied myself all possibilities of a son. But you are right, Julian, the materialist has conquered. Bailiff Jasper Broad is an old man, he cannot continue long in possession of his full faculties. Doctor Bunyan says that already he suffers from his heart."

Julian nodded his head. "That at least is true."

Doctor King continued evenly: "The Cornwallis Estates are large and excellent. There is no reason why you should not become bailiff in his place. Of that you can be moderately sure, of Lord Primrose you can have no assurance. Do you remember *Æsop's* fable about the dog and the bone?"

"Yes," said Julian, "but in that fable there is a bridge, a bridge on which the dog stood to cross the river and from which he saw his reflection. That bridge in my case is Mrs. Polly Broad."

Doctor King walked slowly across the floor of the vestry. He turned about and retraced his steps to face Julian. "Julian," he challenged, "stop talking in riddles. What do you mean?"

Julian shrugged. "Sir, do you suggest that I await the demise of Bailiff Broad with a dual purpose in view?"

"How dare you, Julian? I only speak in the future, I try to look ahead."

"And I, sir," said Julian, "speak of the present. Mrs. Broad has already told me on several occasions that she leads a loveless life, that Bailiff Broad does nothing to fulfil his connubial obligations. She suggests as I am her husband's assistant in so many things I might extend my curriculum."

"No, Julian. No, do not dare to talk in that manner in this House of God."

Julian withstood Doctor King's righteous annoyance. "Others of your parishioners have brought their problems to you, sir, and in this very vestry. I would not have mentioned the matter had you not broached the subject."

"Young man, I refuse to listen to you. Polly Broad! Polly Broad!" Doctor King exclaimed the name. Though he was angry he saw there was an underlying truth in what Julian suggested. Polly Broad was a high-stepping daughter of a Maidstone tradesman. Five years before she had married the bailiff, and not without much comment in the village of Ightham. Jasper Broad was none too popular; the calling of a bailiff does not court popularity, and his marriage with the red-headed Polly Milton, with all her laces and flounces, her airs and graces, and ways of aping a great lady had done nothing to raise him in village esteem. At the Crown Inn, which was the villagers' meeting-place, it had been openly debated whether Old Man Jasper was up to his work with such a fine-fettled filly, and many a joke and a stoop of ale had been wagered on this same burning question. Three years had gone by and no offspring of the union had appeared, and the wagers had drunk the health in wagered ale and declared they were right in what they laid.

Not much of the gossip had escaped Doctor King, and it had not been without a certain amount of trepidation that he had secured the post for Julian. However, more than a year had gone by and he had heard nothing untoward of Julian's joining the Broad household. He had prayed and hoped for the best, but now when he was within an ace of leaving the village Julian had burst this bombshell upon him.

Doctor King sighed.

"Julian, you must learn to resist temptation. That is the Christian duty."

Julian did not appear abashed. "Why, yes, sir. But also I must keep and hold a good and lucrative position, that is the materialistic outlook."

"Even in the face of deadly sin?"

Julian parried. "It has not come to that, sir, I assure you. I talk of the future, of dangers I feel may lie ahead."

An expression of relief came into Doctor King's face.

"You must promise me you will combat temptation."

Julian nodded. "Yes, Doctor," he said almost carelessly. "The temptation and the potential advances of Polly Broad?"

"With all your heart and soul."

"Even if I thereby lose a good and profitable position?"

Doctor King did not answer. A silence fell between them. The doctor could see Polly in no other guise than the wife of the elderly Jasper Broad, hemmed and paled about by the sanctity of marriage vows. He could not appreciate those full red lips, the bright and inviting eye, the often displayed trim ankle and the full and ample breasts of passionate womanhood.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" said Doctor King softly.

The doctor evidently thought this was a moment when Julian could be best left with his thoughts. He moved about the vestry, finding another brief-bag and laying it on the table. Into this he carefully packed his various little personal treasures. The Greek ikons, the gold illuminated texts, the small silver candlesticks which had been his even since his ordination, were all carefully collected and stowed away with a dozen other small effects.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? St. Matthew, chapter xvi, verse 26."

Julian knew that the doctor was not thinking of Polly Broad, or of himself. Arnold King was assessing his own unflinching loyalty to the unfortunate Stuart Cause, and all the suffering and persecution such loyalty had brought for him. The long arms of Hanover and the Whigs had reached out. First Arnold King had been ejected from his tutorship at St. Mary's Hall and Oxford University. Now the same forces were militant against him and his incumbency at St. Mary's, Ightham, was almost at an end. *'Quo vadis? Whither goest thou?'* Where would he go next?

Julian Brett took his courage in both hands. He would ask the self-same question he had demanded a hundred times and more. He would seek the truth of his birth and origin.

"Is this to be the parting of the ways, sir?"

Arnold King looked up; he carried tasselled book-markers in his hands and was in the act of placing them into the brief-bag. "The parting of the ways, Julian? You and I? Perhaps for a little while."

"Yes, sir."

"What else would you?" asked Arnold King.

"That you will tell me who I am and what I am? How I came to Ightham? Why you have been so kind to me? Who were my father and mother? Am I gentle bred? A man of the people? Who? What? Why? Doctor, there are so many questions I would solve. Have pity on me, sir, and help me answer them."

Doctor King put his hand on Julian's shoulder. He looked at him

with all the depth of human kindness and understanding. "Julian, what more can I tell you than you already know? You ask for facts, and I have no facts to give you. If I should make a fiction I would leave you with a lie in my heart. I know nothing, save that your name is Julian Brett—and so you are entered in the register of this parish."

Doctor King walked slowly across to the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, which stood open on a stand in the corner of the vestry. He turned back the pages until he arrived at the year 1724. His finger ran down the column of births and baptismal names until he arrived at the date of the 5th of May.

"Brett. Julian. Foundling. Male. Parents Unknown. Sponsor: Sarah Broad. Widow."

"Is that all? There is nothing else?" asked Julian.

"Yes, save an entry of the Reverend Archibald Strutt—the vicar of the period. But you know that well enough, Julian. You've read it thousands of times; look, the whole page is covered with your finger-marks."

"Please read it, Doctor," asked Julian.

Arnold King peered closely at the register and deciphered the spidery writing.

"This day, the 5th of May of the Year of Grace 1724, I have baptized a foundling brought to me by Sarah Broad, sister-in-law of Jasper Broad, bailiff and agent to the Lord Cornwallis. I have given him the Christian name of Julian, after the Patron Saint of Travellers, for surely the infant is a stranger in a strange land; I have given him the surname of Brett, for he was discovered by the Gateway of Brett's Farm, where Mrs. Sarah Broad lives. Archibald Strutt, M.A., Cantab, Priest."

"There is nothing more?"

"Nothing," said Doctor King slowly. "It seems that Cambridge gave you a name."

"If Oxford refused to give me a degree?" Julian smiled sourly. This question of the degree was a sore subject. When Doctor King had come to the living of St. Mary's, Ightham, one of his first duties had been to read the burial service over the deceased Sarah Broad—a fact which had brought him in contact with Julian Brett, now deprived of his foster-parent, who, though a moody, difficult woman, had treated him with considerable kindness. Mrs. Broad had died practically without means. For years she had been jointly the dependant of her brother, Jasper, and through him of Lord Cornwallis. True she had left her all to young Julian, but this was not more than one hundred pounds after her 'sticks' had been sold.

Doctor King had come to St. Mary's a persecuted and isolated man, and he missed more than anything else the society of young men, which as a popular, human Oxford don he had always been able to gather about him. However the disasters of the Rising of the '45 had made Arnold King realize he must lie low for a while, and the offer of the Cure of Souls at St. Mary's, Ightham, was a boon and a blessing. He had had reason to rejoice that long years before Thomas Herring and he had been fellow students. His pleading



letter to the Primate of All England, wherein he had set out that he wished to turn to God and away from politics, had produced this living.

So Doctor King had discovered a growing interest in this foundling Julian Brett. When they had first met he had been a loose-limbed youth of seventeen, decently educated at the Maidstone Grammar School, where the lusty Thomas Fisher, Master of Arts and schoolmaster, had licked some Latin and less Greek, along with smatterings of other learnings, into his bony frame.

Jasper Broad, who cared nothing for the youthful Julian, had felt constrained to show some interest in the future of the boy. He had consulted with Doctor King and the upshot had been that Julian was to sit for an Exhibitorship in Classics for the College of St. John the Baptist, Oxford, and if he were successful the small legacy was to be put with the scholarship money so that he might go up, read and take his degree.

Julian had obtained the Exhibitorship and gone to St. John's College, and the doctor and Jasper Broad had discussed his prospects with some equanimity. They had agreed that Julian should take his degree and seek ordination into the Church of England. Though Doctor King had voiced the opinion that he did not feel he was cut out for the ministry, the pros had outweighed the cons and the Church of England, even in its super-political state, offered some security and promotion to a young man of accomplishments but no means.

The doctor had arranged everything. He had pulled the necessary strings and even overcome the question of bar-sinister. Jasper Broad—who was then unmarried and rapidly becoming a crabbed bachelor—only wanted to be shot of any responsibility for what he consistently called 'Sarah's Folly'.

But the best-laid plans, as so often in this fickle world, had gone hopelessly astray. Julian's career at Oxford had been anything but divine. The raw-boned youth had turned rapidly into an elegant young man, and there had followed a series of unwarrantable extravagances. He had found, and moved in, the wrong set, striking up friendships with young bloods who cared nothing for scholastic success. He had learnt to fence and use the sword inordinately well, and thereby he had forgotten the adage that the pen was the mightier weapon. If his foils had always been bright his books had grown increasingly dusty. That had not been all; Julian Brett had developed what is described as the 'fatal attraction'. Women could not resist him; he had the indescribable something which played havoc with the hearts and reputations of the opposite sex. Stories had filtered down from Oxford and reached the ears of Doctor King. Such goings-on had not been in harmony with aspirations for the Church. The Selection Board had shaken their heads, and even the influence of the doctor with old colleagues had barely prevented the entry of the word 'Unsuitable' against Julian's name.

On the other hand, Jasper Broad had cared nothing for such reports. He had been in the midst of marrying himself to the attractive, fulsome, ambitious Polly, and being an old fool and an amorous one he had had no ears for anything save his contemplation of forthcoming connubial bliss,

During the vacations Doctor King had talked sternly to Julian. He had tried to point out the follies of his ways, and had discovered to his surprise two traits of the young man's character. The first had been that Julian Brett cared little or nothing for the opposite sex. Women might fawn on him, run after him, and importune him. If they might be of service to him, then he would dally and play with them, but only if he could use them and make them serve him in some manner quite outside sex considerations. On the question of his own physical attractions Julian had been vague, almost sceptical. If he had something which other men did not possess, then he was surely wise to use this 'gift'. He had shocked the doctor with his crude valuation. "Sex is animal, the gratification is also animal. The human brain triumphs when it turns an animal impulse into a human and personal benefit."

The second trait which Oxford had developed was the materialistic outlook—and this in itself had been a bar to a religious career. Mr. James, Julian's tutor, had written Doctor King and had pointed out what he termed 'this altruistic selfishness'. Rodney James was a scholar and a wise man. He had the true background of Julian Brett already sent to him by the doctor. They were old friends enough to allow a complete candour. James had written back in his strangely pointed scholar's hand. He had made a study of Julian Brett, and he had developed a liking for the young man. However, he had discovered a tendency for him to be at war with the world. This might be the result of a feeling of inferiority because of the mystery of his birth and antecedents? However, he had come to the conclusion that Julian Brett was purposely creating a selfish and materialistic atmosphere about himself, which was alien to his better nature. Mr. James had felt Brett might grow out of this materialism. He had hoped he would do so. The tutor had been sure of his findings, and he had sensed the danger that must remain until the phase had passed. Such a letter had brought grave misgivings to Doctor King.

Meanwhile, Jasper Broad had married and wallowed in the joys of connubial bliss. Doctor King had gone to him with his misgivings but the bailiff had had no time to bother his head over 'Sarah's Folly'. A period of *laissez faire* had set in; Doctor King could do naught else. The fatal attraction of Julian Brett had blossomed and in its trail had come the avalanche.

Julian Brett had been sent down from Oxford. That had been the long and short of the whole sordid story. The landlord of the Crown Inn at Benson, in the County of Oxfordshire, had an inordinately pretty daughter. Her fame had reached to the University city itself, and the young bloods amongst the undergraduates had made it a habit to ride out and see the charming Betty, to bask in her smiles and take a glass of wine from her plump, pink-tipped fingers. Amongst others to go there—for after all it had been the fashion—had been Julian Brett. He had not wished for a conquest, but the cuddlesome Betty immediately succumbed to a one-sided infatuation. Julian had accepted her adoration. After all, her father had a good cellar, decent wines, and his daughter could wheedle a little of much-needed credit for the favoured.

However, Betty had not been without other admirers, and amongst them

the rich and fiery Tim Bryant, red-headed, Irish and as wild as a hawk. His eyes had already fixed themselves upon Betty and his desires knew no limits save her entire possession. Betty had preferred Julian Brett, who cared little or nothing for her. Thus the scene had been set, and the two men, one a parentless foundling and the other the son of a peer, though he was an Irish one, had eyed each other furiously, and bad blood had lain in a sullen pool between them.

One night Betty had carried Julian's wine to him first and left Bryant unsupplied. Bryant, red with rage, had seized a pewter and thrown its contents over Julian. In the days of dying chivalry the only answer for such an insult had been a challenge and a duel. Bryant had challenged and Brett had accepted; with great solemnity the seconds of the contending parties had called upon each other to fix the meeting-place and decide on weapons. Rapiers had been chosen and the date and time fixed. The undergraduate section of the Oxford University had leant back and prepared to enjoy themselves. Young Bryant had the strength of a lion and the craft of a tiger; Brett, on the other hand, was accounted the finest fencer of his year. The contest had had the makings of an epic struggle. However, the long arm of the Vice-Chancellor had reached out, the Proctors had gone to the duelling ground and stopped the fight before even swords had been drawn. The grey-haired Vice-Chancellor had summoned the delinquents before him and dealt with them separately. Bryant, because he had no previous misdemeanours marked against him, was rusticated for a term, but Julian had been irrevocably sent down. That had been the end of the story so far as Oxford was concerned. Julian was stigmatized as a man who had been sent down from his University and had not taken his degree.

Mr. Rodney James had written to Doctor King. He had stated his views, and these were that Julian Brett had been victimized somewhat harshly. He had hoped that the young man would find opportunity in another walk of life and had wished him well. But even Mr. James's soothing words had done little to ease the ache in Doctor King's heart.

Doctor King was a true Christian and forgiveness was an ever-present pillar of his faith, but the question of finding a new vocation for Julian had been indeed a difficult matter. At last he had been able to persuade Bailiff Broad—for doubtful family reasons—to take this protégé of the deceased Sarah into his service. The experiment had worked well, for Julian had shown a diligence at his books and a head for figures. There the situation had remained and for six months or more Doctor King had hoped the matter settled.

"She had blue eyes, a pink and white complexion, a figure that was all curves and golden crinkly hair," said Julian, and his eyes twinkled with amusement.

"To whom are you alluding?" asked Doctor King sternly.

"Why, Betty of the Crown Inn," answered Julian. "Surely that was the trend of your thoughts, sir?"

Doctor King frowned. "She is now the mistress of the Honourable Timothy Bryant and living with great show and wantonness in the city of Dublin. You have that information, Julian?"

Julian shrugged his shoulders. "Why, yes, sir. She is matching her dishonourable with his honourable situation." He smiled. "Perhaps I have served her, sir, in some small way. If Tim Bryant had not been forced to strive so hard after her he'd not have put so high a value on her charms. They were passable, sir, passable, but I'm afraid she'll run to fat and have trouble with her stay laces with the oncome of years."

Doctor King grew outraged. "Julian, I refuse to allow you to speak in this manner and in this place! Can't you get these absurdities out of your head? Won't you realize your situation?"

"My situation, sir?" asked Julian.

"Yes," said Doctor King, and the anger went out of his voice. "Julian, my boy, listen to me. You are worshipping a shibboleth, you have built great romance about yourself and the manner of your discovery by Sarah Broad. I know you consider yourself to be the abandoned child of great parents, that sooner or later a fairy story will unfold and some great heritage will be yours. Let me warn you against this tomfoolery and implore you to dismiss it from your mind. You were born in troublous times, when persecution was rife and men and women had to abandon all and fly for their lives. Bands of robbers roamed England and did much violence, morals were as lax as laws, and thieves stole chastity as readily as they pilfered gold and silver. Therefore it is likely as not that you were the child of some lowly wayward creature and a promiscuous father; accept that as the probability and forget this romanticism."

Julian winced. Doctor King meant to hurt him and his words seared into his very soul.

"So I stand condemned to the Cornwallis books and the charity of the Broads?" he asked. "Could I not be a soldier; could I not go forth and fight and win honour for myself or at least die in a blaze of glory?"

Doctor King shook his head. "No, Julian. What I have said once I have said a thousand times. There is no money to buy you a commission in any regiment, not even the meanest."

"But," said Julian quickly, "I could join the ranks, I could serve and win my way upwards."

"I can be no party to that." Doctor King sighed. "How could I send you to serve in the ranks of the Hanovers when my heart and soul is pledged to the Stuarts?"

A silence fell between them. Julian saw that Arnold King's emotion was very great. He had turned his head away from him and was gazing through the open door of the vestry and outwards to where the rustling blossoms of the fruit trees met with the simple austerity of the churchyard.

From the distance there came the sound of the clatter of horse-hooves. Iron shoes were striking against the cobbles and flints of the village street.

Doctor King crossed to the vestry door and stood there. Julian took a position behind him and together they gazed out, across the churchyard.

A Sheriff's posse was winding its way across the village green. A few idling villagers looked out and saw it pass, marvelling at the pomp and majesty of the law, ecclesiastical and temporal.

The Sheriff's posse consisted of the Vice-Chancellor of the diocese, the

Under-Sheriff of the County of Kent, and six Sheriff's officers, who bore the halberds of their office. Both the Vice-Chancellor and the Under-Sheriff were gowned, and sat their horses with a great display of pomp and self-importance. The party came riding up the hill and at the church gate they dismounted.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" called the chief of the Sheriff's officers. The villagers of Ightham, hearing this invitation, hurried across to form a semi-circle about the officers of the law.

The Under-Sheriff produced an imposing document which was heavily sealed and ribboned, and handed it with great deference to the Vice-Chancellor of the diocese. The Vice-Chancellor unrolled the scroll, blew his cheeks, peered short-sightedly at the close-written engrossment.

"I, Thomas Cantua, Primate of all England, pursuant of primo Elizabethae and articles of religion, sections XXXIII and XXVI, and pursuant also of the Test Act a Statute of his most Excellent Majesty Charles II, and by virtue of subsequent Acts of William III and Mary and George I, let it be known that Arnold King, Doctor of Divinity, Graduate of the University of Oxford, is put forth from this living and ministry of St. Mary's, Ightham. . . ."

The Vice-Chancellor paused, and a murmur of wonderment went from lip to lip amongst the villagers. The yokels were gazing stolidly on and frowning. They were English enough to dislike this show of force and this infringement upon the hallowed right of free speech and free worship.

The Vice-Chancellor glowered at the yokels, found his place and continued to read. It was a wordy affair, full of pains and penalties and Acts of Parliament and fines, threats of imprisonment, talk of felony and malfeasance, and even of treason itself. But the purport in the main was that the said Doctor King was no longer the priest of St. Mary's, Ightham, and the long hand of King George had stretched forth and put him out.

Doctor King stood at the doorway of the vestry. He motioned for Julian to bring his brief bags and set them outside the church. He locked the door carefully and stood there with his keys jangling in his hand.

The Vice-Chancellor went on reading, but the Under-Sheriff had perceived Doctor King and came arrogantly towards him, two of his officers walking ready on guard behind him.

"Arnold King," he demanded, "I require the keys of this church."

Doctor King bowed and held out the key-ring and had it snatched out of his hand by the Under-Sheriff. Julian saw the gesture and would have interfered but Doctor King restrained him with a motion of his hand.

"Be quiet, Julian!" he ordered. "You don't want Mr. Sheriff to make a hanging job of this. I know nothing would please him better."

The Sheriff's officers were leering and the voice of the Vice-Chancellor continued in a monotone. At last the reading came to an end.

"God Save the King," said the Vice-Chancellor and lifted his three-cornered hat from off his white full-bottomed wig.

"God Save the King," said the Sheriff's officers.

And "God Save the King," said the Under-Sheriff.

One of the Sheriff's officers produced a hammer and nails, and taking the document of inhibition fastened it to the door of the church. The Under-Sheriff, jangling the key-ring, walked across to join the Vice-Chancellor of the Diocese. They exchanged a few words in undertones, the while looking cautiously towards Doctor King. With a shrug of their shoulders they motioned for their horses to be brought and mounted them. The Sheriff's officers followed suit and the Under-Sheriff made a gesture with his hand.

"Let's be gone," he said. "Our business is done."

The villagers stolidly made way for them. They watched them go riding across the green and make for the Maidstone turnpike. Very soon they had disappeared and only very distantly over the still air came the sound of the horse-hooves and the jangle of the harness.

"Your bags, sir," said Julian.

"If you would carry them to the Vicarage and stand them there at the door. I am nearly packed." The doctor sighed. "You see, little birds have whispered in my ear long enough that this was coming. These Whigs are clever; they realized that I was a half-way house between the House of Stuart and London." He shrugged his shoulders and they walked in silence out of the churchyard, through the gates of the Vicarage and to the stone porch. Julian put down the bags.

"I am sorry, sir," he said slowly.

"So am I," agreed Doctor King. "I am sorry for the people of Ightham, I am sorry for the Church of England. Faith and politics make bad bed-fellows."

A voice came calling across the village green. "Julian, Julian! Where are you, Julian? Your dinner's waiting, Julian!" The tone was high-pitched, female, a little grating, yet full and young.

Doctor King looked meaningly at Julian Brett. "Mrs. Polly Broad looks after the inner man, Julian."

Julian smiled. "Why, yes, sir. She believes that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. She repeats that adage at every meal." He shrugged his shoulders. "Mr. Broad is a dyspeptic and eats nothing. I wonder whose stomach she means."

Doctor King was in no mood for frivolities. "I am going tonight," he announced. "Ned Squires is bringing a post-chaise from Maidstone. He has made me a special price."

"Tonight?" said Julian. "So you go tonight, sir? May I come and wish you God-speed?"

Doctor King put out his hand and clasped Julian's. "Wish me God-speed here and now, Julian. Too many good-byes would break my heart."

"Good-bye, sir, and may God preserve you," said Julian fervently, and let go Doctor King's hand.

"Thank you, Julian. Go to your dinner; please go to your dinner. I would not ask you to spoil your dinner or anything for my sake."

## CHAPTER FIVE

## POINT AND COUNTER-POINT

THE Broads lived, what Jasper liked to term, 'Old Style'. That was to say, they took their dinner at noon. This was the big meal, with much meat and bread, gravy, pastry, batter-cake and suchlike in great profusion. Jasper Broad also ate 'Old Style' that was; he spurned the new-fangled niceties of cutlery, declaring that the forks he knew about were for hoiking muck and not food. His method of eating was with his clasp-knife and greasy fingers, in a shovel-like process whereby food was conveyed to his mouth in an endless chain.

Recently Jasper had 'enjoyed' ill health. He had a 'belly' on him, as he described the complaint, and wind that wound about his heart and near choked the breath out of him. Polly Broad watched her husband's diminished appetite with ill-concealed satisfaction. She was thankful this gluttony and the belching which followed it had come to an end. It gave her satisfaction to see Jasper nibbling at rusks and drinking weak soup. The truth was she had never loved this grizzled, powerful man with his ragged beard and stooping shoulders. He had been a means to an end, the method whereby she had escaped from the drudgery of her father's general store in Maidstone. Quite willingly she had gone to the altar and then to bed with him, to discover that he snored uproariously and eternally smelt of cow. She readily made a physical sacrifice—there was no love in it—for material gain. Jasper might serve his absent master, Lord Cornwallis, well, but he also looked excellently after his own business, and rumour had it rightly that the old skinflint was a very rich man.

Polly, on the other hand, was an elegant, voluptuous and fine figure of a woman. She would never see thirty again, same as Jasper would never see sixty, but she was well preserved, firm of breast, tight of hip and trim of ankle. For Polly prided herself on being refined. All her life she had aped the great lady, and internally longed for niceties of life and the fashion. She would have liked to have worn powder and patches, to have felt the rustle of fine silks and satins against her shapely limbs, and to have possessed her coach, her sedan chair and her *salon*. Instead her lot was nothing save a smelly, creaking husband and the rustic, uneventful existence of Ightham, which drove her nearly to screaming-point.

Jasper might have had all the money in the world, but he would never spend a penny without thinking twice, and never pay a halfpenny when a farthing would serve. How could a passionate, red-headed, full-lipped woman share her life with such a misery? She wanted a decent table with fine napery, silver cutlery and twinkling glass. She hated this ivy-covered box-like contraption which was the Bailiff's House. She loathed Ightham and all that lived in it, man, beast and bird. She hated everything in the place. Everything? No, not quite everything; there was the exception that proved the rule.

Jasper Broad sucked noisily at his bowl of beef tea and munched

distastefully at a toast rusk. He put down the half-eaten rusk with obvious dislike and started to pick his teeth with the point of his knife.

Polly faced him across the table and mincingly fed herself with morsels of mutton by means of her own and special silver fork.

"Where is that Julian Brett?" demanded Jasper sourly.

The cold expression on Polly's face softened slightly, but her husband was too busy with his teeth to notice this change.

"Julian? Why, I've called him to his dinner. He's with Parson King on the green. Saying good-bye, likely. They're good friends and this will be a parting." She had the Kentish burr in her speech despite her fine ways.

"Parson King?" grunted the bailiff. "And good riddance to him, that's what I'm saying. Good riddance to bad rubbish. Wife, listen to me. Good King George, he pays the parsons, don't he?"

Polly conceded with a nod that she supposed this was so.

"Right, woman, and a fellow what pays for anything has the rights to say how that thing shall be; that's the same for king and peasant, ain't it."

"You're talking about something that don't concern you, Jasper," snapped Polly. His habit of calling her 'woman' infuriated her. Personally she did not give a jot for Doctor King, Jacobites, non-jurors, or politics, but she wanted an argument as a safety-valve to her feelings.

"Who's talking rubbish?"

"You are, Jasper Broad," she snapped back at him. "Parson King has been the best man we've had at Ightham for many a moon, and what he says goes. Religion is one thing, and politics is another. And if those Whigs want a religion that fits their politics they should write a new one, special, and not try fiddling and changing something that's stood for a thousand and a half years and more."

"That's what Parson King has been saying in the pulpit." Jasper carefully cleaned his knife on the corner of the tablecloth, which happened to be a clean one. He glanced up, caught the look of disdain on his wife's face and glared. "Since when have you been bothering your head about politics, religion and suchlike?" he demanded suspiciously. "That Julian Brett hasn't been putting ideas into your head, has he, Polly?"

"More'n you could do, Jasper," she answered tartly.

"Damned foundling!" sneered Jasper. "Oxford, if you please, but they soon found his measure and had him out. Setting his cap at the nobility, if you please. The Honourable Bryant ought to have taken a horse-whip to him and never bothered about a sword. Fine parson Mister Julian Brett'd have made with his cut-throat ways."

"Julian did it to save the girl, he did. And I believe him."

"And do you? Well, what I says is any man as believes any woman is too big a fool to learn anything. That's what I say, and my poor sister-in-law Sarah's money poured down the drain."

"Better poured down the drain than into your pocket, Jasper," retorted Polly. "And Sarah had a right to leave her money the way she wanted. And you've got money enough without grudging the little bit Julian's had."

Jasper looked towards his wife and blinked his red-rimmed eyes. "My money! My money! What's mine's my own."



"You mean what was Lord Cornwallis's is yours now, don't you? I'm no kitten, I was born with my eyes open."

"No kitten, eh? And no chicken, neither." Jasper gave a sudden guffaw. "You'll be getting grey-haired before your time, Polly Broad, fighting all Brett's battles for him."

Polly saw the red light. Jasper was becoming jealous of Julian and open hostilities between them were to be avoided. She had already made her plans and Julian was a part of them. She changed the subject cleverly.

"Don't you bother your head about Julian, husband, and I won't neither. What did Surgeon Bunyan say about you this morning?"

Jasper, who had ridden into Maidstone and consulted Doctor Bunyan that very morning, grew confidential. His health was always a subject of great interest to him.

"Listen, Polly lass," he said. "It's my heart that's at fault. Them valves, or whatever they call them, that open and shut, don't open and shut as they ought to. I needs to be careful with myself. He's sending over a physic by the carrier this afternoon, and you're to give it to me regularly."

Polly, who had had more than enough of her husband's physicks, pulled a wry face.

"Did you bring the nux vomica out with you?" she asked. "Those foxes have been about the hens again and Lord Cornwallis or no Lord Cornwallis, those damned foxes aren't going to fatten on my poultry."

Jasper nodded. "That's coming out with the carrier likewise. I didn't go to the apothecary for it, seein' as how I was with Surgeon Bunyan I dropped a word to him."

Polly giggled. "It'd be a bad look-out for you, Jasper, if the bottles got mixed."

He looked keenly at her. "It would that. But I don't think there's much fear. The poison is in a big flask and clearly marked and the physic is a little phial of a thing. I saw him put them up with my own eyes."

"Then why didn't you bring them out with you?"

"Because I forgot, and I was half-way out here before I remembered. And passing Ned Trite on his carrier's cart I gave him a word and promised him the price of a drink if he'd call in and fetch them."

She changed the subject. "There's Julian," she said, "and high time, too."

They could hear Julian's voice talking in the kitchen. Mary, the little cross-eyed drab who served as general maid, was fussing about him. A moment later his footsteps came along the passage-way and he appeared in the doorway, followed by Mary, who carried a plate heaped high with his dinner, all steaming and hot from the oven.

Jasper continued to grumble. He hardly acknowledged Julian's greeting and made a series of caustic remarks about young men who didn't care how they used their master's time. There was this, that and the other to do and they would be working day and night when quarter-day came, if matters were not brought up to date.

Julian took no notice of the Bailiff's ill-humour. He started to eat his dinner, using a knife and fork in a refined manner, whilst Polly fussed about

him, drawing beer, passing the condiments and seeing that he was supplied with cookies and pastries.

Jasper rose heavily to his feet and without a word lumbered off to the counting-house. Polly watched his going and grimaced after him.

"His heart's wrong," she said. "Doctor Bunyan has told him."

Julian put down his knife and fork and looked thoughtfully at her.

"I wouldn't have thought it needed a doctor to tell him that, Mrs. Broad."

"Why don't you call me Polly? With your Mrs. this and your Mrs. that you make me feel old enough to be your grandmother, and that's not true, is it, Julian?"

Julian went on eating. "A man's as old as he feels and a woman as young as she looks," he said between mouthfuls.

Polly might have hoped for a talkative time with Julian but she was doomed to disappointment. He was taciturn and moody, and though she tried a dozen subjects he showed no inclination to enter into discussion. She had woman's wit enough to know what was in his mind.

"I'm afraid you've lost a friend, Julian," she said at last. "But if you lose a friend often it is you find a fresh one."

Julian took a pull from his beer tankard, looked thoughtfully at her and nodded his head. "So I've heard it said, Mrs. Broad."

He rose to his feet, brushed the crumbs from his coat and waistcoat and walked across to a mirror. Here he stood straightening his stock, pulling the set of his coat to the right position and patting his hair into place and fanning out the black ribbon which tied the queue.

Polly simpered. "A fine figure of a man."

Julian nodded to his reflection. "So I've heard it said, Mrs. Broad."

Polly started to collect the dirty dishes with much unnecessary banging. She piled them high on to a tray and picking this up she swept provocatively out of the dining-room.

Julian spent the afternoon in the counting-house and at the ledgers. He disliked this type of work intensely but Broad always gave him the book-worming to do and went on the outdoor jobs himself. The younger man would have dearly loved to have ridden round the Cornwallis Estate, to have inspected the farms, the stock and the crops, but such things were denied him.

He made a lot of entries in the ledgers that afternoon, and he noticed what a deal of money was being spent on palings and rails and posts. He knew what this meant: Broad had advised his lordship to buy up the stints and holdings on the commons land. This was a good business, and small prices paid to impecunious crofters, peasants and widows, bought valuable commons rights. Once his lordship, or the Bailiff, had the whole of the stints in their name, up went the palings, the fences and the hedges, the land became the personal property of the Lord of the Manor or his agent for all time. It was a mean business but a clever one, and took a mentality such as Jasper Broad's to have thought it out.

The only interruption during the whole of the afternoon was the arrival of Ned Trite, the carrier, with the bottles of physic and nux vomica from

Surgeon Bunyan. These Julian placed on the top of his high desk and forgot all about until Polly Broad appeared, saw the bottles and took them quickly away. In fact, she was so anxious to get the drugs into her possession that Julian wondered what all the stir was about. However, he soon forgot this passing interest in the maze of entries, additions and subtractions which the accounts required.

It was more than twilight before he had finished and the room was very nearly dark. Mary, the maid, brought candles, but he waved them away. He did not intend to work any later, he wanted to forget the idiosyncrasies of the Cornwallis Estate and concentrate for a little while upon his own thoughts and problems. He wondered if this fellow Bonnie Prince Charlie or his father, who called himself James III, would ever get back the British Throne. Doctor King was a clever man, maybe a bit of an idealist, but a clever man for all that. . . . Julian could not quite make up his mind where practicability ceased and ideology began. He wished the doctor had allowed him to go back to the Vicarage, to sit with him a little longer on this last evening and talk. He knew that he was a prodigal and that he deserved scant consideration. . . . Ah, well! he thought, the world was made of partings. Ightham would be a sad and lonely place without his guide and mentor.

A fire was still burning in the grate of the counting-house. Julian got down from his high stool, walked across and stirred the embers into a blaze. He pulled up an easy chair and settled comfortably in it. Now the flames were flickering and they seemed in harmony with his thoughts. Leaping up and trying to achieve something, and then flickering away with nothing done. He searched in his pocket and took out his diary. Ever since the first day at Oxford he had kept this journal, making entries of his most exciting moments, his impressions, his friends and the teachings of his tutor and the lecturers. It was all there. He turned over the pages idly. Right up to that fateful moment when the Vice-Chancellor had sent him down. Several days in the journal were blank after that. All that appeared were scrawling crosses which gave some clue to the mental misery which Julian had suffered during that period. But after a while the entries started again. They told that Julian had taken a position as clerk and assistant to Jasper Broad in the estate office of Lord Cornwallis. There were mentions of Doctor King, of the words and wisdom that he had said. Also there were spasmodic entries about Polly Broad. Polly Broad was an attractive woman, Polly Broad was a clever woman, Polly Broad was a good cook, Polly Broad had knitted him a pair of stockings, Polly Broad had laundered him a shirt especially for the Ightham Fair. He remembered the Ightham Fair with some pleasure. The minstrels had played well and he had danced with Mrs. Broad. Yes, there was an entry in the diary about that. He had written that he had danced several times with Polly Broad, that Jasper Broad was drunk and therefore did not see what had happened, but that many of the villagers had tittle-tattled loud and long about the business. He turned over another page. "Polly Broad's affections are obviously unrequited in so far as Broad is concerned. She is turning an inviting eye towards me. What will I win or what will I lose if I play into her hand?"

Julian sat looking at the entry. The flames from the fire were flickering lower and lower. The light diminished, his writing became blurred and impossible to read. He stretched himself luxuriously, he started to nod. Jasper Broad had gone out to the North Farms. It would be a long time before he was back. Why not a little sleep, for sleep, like nectar, was the gift of the gods?

Polly Broad came on tiptoe into the counting-house.

"Julian," she whispered. "Julian."

She saw that he was asleep and moved quietly to the side of his chair.

"Julian," she said again, this time louder.

He started, opened his eyes and yawned. "Why, Mrs. Broad, are you an angel or something, come to awaken a lonely man?"

He spoke lightly but she took encouragement at his words.

"I didn't know where you were," she whispered. "I thought you had gone out, perhaps walked up to have a last talk with Doctor King. I never thought to find you in the counting-house at this late hour."

The fire was still smouldering. She threw some timber on to it and it blazed up. Julian quizzed her. She was wearing a lace negligée over her petticoats and her hair was down over her shoulders, loosely tied with a ribbon. But if this part of her toilet was made to affect the haphazard, her face had obviously been freshly painted, and her lips were scarlet.

"Is it very late?" asked Julian artlessly.

Polly nodded emphatically. "Why, yes, it is near on nine o'clock."

"Then Mr. Broad's come back?"

"Nearly an hour since. He's very drunk. A good thing that Nigger, that horse of his, knows his way home. Those farmers of the North Farms have filled him up and no mistake."

"They always do," said Julian. "Where is he now?"

"In the dining-room having a nightcap."

"Before he goes out like a light."

"I wish he would," whispered Polly.

Julian rose slowly to his feet and stretched himself.

"Wouldn't that be unfortunate for both of us? You'd lose a husband and I a master."

"A bad husband and a bad master."

"I suppose so."

He stood looking down at her. She took a half-step towards him and stopped. She tilted up her face, obviously wishing to be kissed.

Julian did not move. She frowned and her lips went into a pout—very full red lips, a large mouth and pearly teeth that glistened.

"Julian!" she said suddenly. "Listen to me; why do you treat me this way? Why do you keep me at arm's length? Can't you see reason, sense? Can't you understand why I have come here? I told a lot of lies; I knew you were in the counting-house, that you were asleep, but I had to wait and be careful; I knew Jasper would come in drunk, that was certain. Well, he is

drunk, and he is safe there with a bottle of brandy that will near blow his head off. . . ."

"Yes?" said Julian. "And you've taken off your dress, and put on a *négligée*?"

"Must I explain everything? Would you drag it word for word as does a torturer from a criminal? Julian, you and I are young, life-blood flows in our veins. We are attractive to the world and attractive to each other. The male and female. Did they teach you nothing at Oxford? If you are a young god, can I not play Aphrodite?"

Julian chuckled. "What! Aphrodite! In a maze of petticoats and a lace *négligée*!"

"I'll take them off! I'll take them off!"

"Why?" asked Julian. "We haven't a sea, anyway, for you to emerge from."

Her face grew hard. "You're scorning me, laughing at me. I love you! I want you! You're ambitious. Well, so am I. Don't think of any loyalty towards Jasper. He'd disgrace you if it suited his purpose. He'd throw you into the street if he thought he could gain by it. Why not you and I? At first we can be clandestine, but later—Julian, later—we can come out into the open! Jasper can't last long. His heart's bad. His stomach is in a terrible state. Besides, he is old, and you and I are young, Julian. Don't you understand? Once you told me you would use a woman if she could help you. Can't you see that I could help you? If Jasper goes, then his lordship will need another bailiff. Who could speak for you better than I?" She dropped her voice to a confidential whisper. "More than once I have caught his lordship's eye when he has visited Ightham."

"To what purpose?" asked Julian guardedly.

"Why, Julian, if he likes me, his lordship would take my nomination for the post of bailiff."

"I see," said Julian slowly. "If your husband died I would share your favours with his lordship. Well, there are pros and likewise there are cons. But such a lot depends upon Jasper dying."

She took an impulsive movement towards him. She knew that he was playing with her, parrying her advances and holding her at arm's length. She could not allow this to go on, she had had enough of it, more than enough. For weeks she had planned Julian's conquest, she had waited for the exact and precise moment.

"Julian," she said hoarsely, "don't you understand? Don't you know why I am doing all this? Oh, my dear, we could be so happy, you and I. We could conquer worlds together. There is nothing we could not do. . . ."

"Save wait until Jasper died."

She gasped and her lips opened, her breath was coming quicker and her bosom heaved, brazenly from behind their scant covering.

"Why should we wait for Jasper? I have waited for Jasper too long, in all and everything. Julian, I refuse to be put off. Your everything depends on me. Why should I do all and you give nothing?"

Julian found himself swept away with the vehemence of her passion.

He had to think quickly and wondered what on earth he could say or do. Adultery was an ugly crime, and adultery under the same roof and with the wife of his master was fraught with danger.

"Wait, Polly," he implored. "Wait. Let's think this out."

She cut him short. "I can't wait! I can't live without you, Julian!"

From the distance of the dining-room there came the sound of a crash, the topple and thud of a body falling on the floor, and the shatter of breaking glass.

"What's that?" asked Julian quickly.

Polly did not answer. She had grasped hold of his hand and was clinging tight to it and her nails bit into his flesh.

"It's Jasper," she said. "Another of those fits of his. Surgeon Bunyan warned him against it, this drinking of brandy."

Distantly came the sound of groaning, the horrible, gasping, choking groans which are the symptoms of angina pectoris. The awful fear of impending doom, the dreadful pain and the dread of movement of anything which will aggravate the asphyxia.

"Come!" whispered Polly hoarsely.

"That medicine," said Julian quickly. "You took it, didn't you? The physic which the surgeon sent."

"Yes, yes," she said. "It's in the dining-room. I'll go and give him some. Maybe it will relieve him. You wait where you are, Julian."

She hurried forward, her shoes tapping on the boards. Julian hesitated, wondered what best to do and moved stealthily on tiptoe after her. She went along the passage and turned into the dining-room.

Jasper Broad was groaning, and there must have been some easing of his agony, for his words were becoming intelligible.

"I'm strangling—dying—I can't breathe—the pain . . . the pain . . . !"

He was lying on his back, his head beneath the chair on which he had sat and a trickle of blood was running from a cut forehead. His body was half under the table and the brandy decanter and glass had both fallen and broken upon the floor, so that he lay in a welter of spirit. His face looked upwards and through his bleary clouded vision he recognized Polly's figure.

"Wife!" he whispered hoarsely. "Wife! That physic—give it to me! Give it to me!"

She stood looking down at him, tantalizing and torturing him. "Jasper Broad, with your nasty drinking ways," she sneered, "you're a better companion for pigs than human beings. Why should I do anything for you, you sot! You've never done anything for me, have you, save growl and grumble and scrape and save?"

"The physic!" he muttered. "The pain and suffering, the agony—the agony, Polly!"

His voice rose into a hoarse wail and his hand went to his throat, clutching and tearing at it.

"I can't breathe and my heart's stopped beating. The physic! Give me the physic!"

She did not move, her eyes were narrowed to slits, and her hands were upon her hips.

"What do I care if you can't breathe? Jasper Broad, I have longed for the day when you draw your last breath, and why should I stir myself to put life back into you?"

"Pity," he gasped. "In heaven's name, pity!" A spasm of choking coughing shook him, but she stood looking down at him and not moving. "All I have for the physic," he whispered.

"All you have, Jasper Broad. Maybe I'd rather have all you have and you dead as well. Have you ever thought of things that way? When you came back full of drink with your cursing and abusing. Do you remember the time you took up your hunting-crop and left weals across my white shoulders? You were drunk when you did that and in the morning you were sober and you forgot. But I hadn't, Jasper Broad."

The spasm seemed to be going off, and his breath was coming more easily, but he was still shocked and dazed with the attack. With the greatest effort he raised himself on an elbow, his lips moving and twisting as he gulped in his breath. Polly had seen the change. She walked quickly across to the dresser and took down a bottle.

"You want a drop of your physic, do you, Jasper? All right, my man." Her voice became kindly, almost cooing. "Here's a little drop to fix you up. It's Polly, don't be frightened. You've had a bad dream, that's all." She dropped on one knee beside him and put her arm about his shoulders, raising his head and steadying it. "Now, open your lips and shut your eyes, you'll be all right in a moment." She pulled out the stopper of the bottle with her teeth and lowered it to the level of his lips. All the while she crooned and soothed him, moving the bottle closer and closer to his mouth.

"But I don't want it now," he remonstrated. "The need's gone. I'm getting better."

"You have a nice drop of the surgeon's medicine—just the thing for you."

Jasper Broad opened his eyes. "Polly, I don't want it," he said. "I don't want it! Take it away!" His voice rose with the agony of fear. "That's the wrong bottle! You're poisoning me!"

"Hold your tongue," rasped Polly; "you don't know what you're saying."

He made a terrific effort, but his strength started to ebb. The exertion was too much for him and a fit of faintness was fast coming over him. He gasped and spluttered and his lower jaw dropped.

Polly made an impulsive movement with her right hand and some of the liquid splashed out of the bottle and soaked his cravat. Her hand continued onwards to his lips, his mouth sagged open.

Julian, standing unseen in the doorway, came to an instant decision and leapt forward. With a well-planted kick from his right foot he caught the bottle fair and square, knocking it out of Polly's hand and sending it shattering against the wainscoting.

With a scream of fury Polly threw Jasper from her and jumped to her feet.

"You meddling fool! You idiot!" she stormed. Oaths and curses could not come quickly enough.

Julian stood looking at her, breasting the fury of her passion.

"Idiot! Imbecile! Lunatic! Meddler! Fig! You dirty bastard!" she squealed.

Julian's expression hardened. He gave her a push in the face with his open hand that sent her staggering backwards across the room, and turning he strode quickly through the door and slammed it behind him.

Julian reached the hallway and here the frightened little slut, Mary, came running towards him.

"Mr. Julian!" she gasped. "What's happened? The master—the mistress! Has somebody gone mad? I'd have thought murder was afoot."

Julian took down his great-coat from a peg. "There won't be murder, Mary—leastways, not now." He pushed his arms through the sleeves of the coat.

"What do you mean, Mr. Julian?" she said, her eyes black with fright. "Don't leave me here if there's murder afoot. Don't, Mr. Julian! For God's sake don't leave me here!"

He tried to reassure her. "You'll be all right, Mary. It's over now. The hand of the Lord—you know, what Parson King used to teach you." He changed the subject abruptly. "Where's my hat?" he asked.

"Your hat, Mr. Julian? Oh, I've got it in the kitchen. I was steaming and brushing the felt for you, the same as I always do." She slobbered with sluttish adoration.

"Then go and fetch it for me, will you, Mary? There's a good girl."

"Of course, Mr. Julian, of course, I'll go at once." She turned and went running away. Julian looked after her. From the dining-room another female voice was calling.

"Julian, come back. Come back, Julian! I love you, I didn't mean what I said. Julian! Julian!"

Julian started to button up the flaps of his great-coat, and as he did so he caught his reflection in the wing mirror upon the wall.

"Good-looking," he thought. "Too damned good-looking!" Well, good looks must be turned to assets the same as everything else. He smiled at his reflection and thrusting his hand into his pocket he fumbled for a coin. He looked down at it as it lay in the palm of his hand. A penny—a Georgian penny. Heads or tails? He spun the coin and caught it deftly. Tails up! King George's head was not showing—that was an omen, anyway. He pulled back the bolts of the front door and stepped out into the porch. Away across at the Vicarage he could see the candle lamps of a coach glimmering and the steaming breath of the horses wafting across the light. Tails, he said to himself, tails, and King George was underneath. Fate, at least, had decided something for him.

Mary's voice came calling from the kitchen. "I won't be a minute with your hat, Mr. Julian. It will be finished in a trice."

Julian shrugged his shoulders. What did a hat matter at a moment like this? He stepped out through the door and closed it softly. He began to walk down the gravel of the pathway and his boots crumped noisily. He reached the wicket gate and pressed the sneck.



"Julian!" wailed the voice of Polly Broad. "Julian! Julian! Come back! come back! Julian!"

He opened the wicket and passed into the roadway. An instant later he had started to run with top speed towards the Vicarage.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE KING'S HIGHWAY

DOCTOR KING pulled his travelling rug closer about him. The night was cold and the mists from the orchards swept into the coach and chilled the very marrow of his bones.

"I can't understand, Julian, this change of plan. At the last moment you rush to this coach, hatless and breathless. You implore me to take you with me—you come without baggage, without change of shift or clothing. And all you can say is that you feared to break a commandment."

"Not a commandment, sir, several of them. I would name, for instance, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth, the ninth and the tenth."

Doctor King gasped. His mind was still somewhat agitated. Julian's sudden arrival at the Vicarage, his insistence upon a seat in the coach and his defiant declaration that he had finished with Ightham once and for all and meant to find fame and fortune in London had been both unwarranted and inconvenient. Yet the good doctor could refuse Julian nothing. He had gained a seat in the coach and now they were on the road for London.

They had been travelling for more than an hour, the coach bumping over the uneven cart-track which called itself a road and which led northwards to Eynsford and thence on to the Maidstone-London road. The branches from the fruit trees and from the hedgerows switched against the roof and sides of the coach, and the glimmer of the candles in the lamps made strange figures about them. The journey was eerie, unpleasant and apprehensive.

A silence fell, only broken by the sodden plop of the horses' hooves and the occasional oaths of the coachman.

"Why isn't Ned Squires driving tonight?" asked Julian suddenly.

"He's in bed with lumbago," answered Doctor King. "This fellow brought a message from him when he came as deputy."

Julian bit his lip. "That may be as may be, but Ned Squires was right as a trivet yesterday and lumbago does not come as quickly as all that."

He looked with disfavour at the back of the coachman, large and voluminous in his heavy box-cloth coat.

"He shouldn't swear like that, not with a parson aboard."

"Oh, leave him be," said Doctor King tersely. "I want to get on. There's no time for argument or delay."

He peered cautiously out of the window. "I suppose this is the Eynsford road?"

"Heaven knows," returned Julian. "All roads look the same on a night like this."

He leant forward in his seat and stuck his head out of the window. It was rather difficult to see ahead, for the carriage lamps cramped his vision and the steam from the horses made things worse.

"There's a light glimmering down the road, sir," he said suddenly. "Looks as if we are coming on a toll bar or something of the sort."

Doctor King was fidgeting nervously and pulling his fingers.

"It's a toll bar all right by the looks of it," repeated Julian, "and there's a man standing in the middle of the road swinging a lantern to and fro. It looks mighty strange to me."

He had hardly got the words out of his mouth when there came the sound of galloping horses, a spatter of water from kicked-up puddles and the swirl and clatter as a horseman came up on each side of the coach and reined in.

"Stand ho!" shouted a voice. "Stand ho, there!"

The coachman on the box did not need a second telling. He hauled hard on his reins and brought his horses to a stop.

"Idiot!" shouted Julian. "Drive for your life—drive on, man!"

"Stand ho!" shouted a horseman, and the glimmer from the lamps lighted upon menacing pistol barrels pointing straight into the coach.

"Whoa! Whoa, there! Steady, boy. Steady, lass," called the voice of the coachman.

"If only I had a pistol!" muttered Julian.

Doctor King put a restraining hand upon his arm. "Julian, we can't fight them—they're too many for us. We must wait and use our brains. Maybe it is not as hopeless as that."

"Outside, the pair of you," ordered a voice, and a horse-pistol made a menacing gesture to amplify this command. "Outside, I say, and hurry!"

"Highwaymen, by the look of them," muttered Julian, and thought it strange that such a party of men should bother themselves with a poor haul such as they were.

Doctor King climbed out of the coach stiffly, and Julian came after him. The horses were standing steady now and the two mounted men had been joined by three dismounted fellows; one of these carried a lantern, which he shone enquiringly into the doctor's face.

"Follow me," ordered a man gruffly. "And here, Jack, you keep your eyes open and see there're no monkey tricks."

The light from the lantern combined with those of the coach gave a rough idea of the surroundings. A cottage stood on the right of the road and this had every appearance of being unoccupied. The toll bar itself was up and the road free for passage, but the stakes and slot at the other side were firmly planted and looked strong enough to stand almost anything.

"Take 'em inside," said the leader, "and here, you two——" He turned to a couple of men who had come out of the gloom. "You go over the coach and search the cushions—slit 'em if necessary. Queer things are hid in queerer places these days."

"Aye, aye, master."

They moved towards the cottage and the door creaked open. Another lantern glimmered inside and Julian and Doctor King were unceremoniously pushed into a square-shaped room, with broken walls, completely unfurnished save for a table which stood drunkenly on three legs.

"Well?" asked Julian. "Are you content?"

The leader glowered. "You hold your tongue," he ordered, "and speak when you're spoken to." He pushed Julian towards the table on which stood the lantern and a burly fellow came to stand by his side, his fists clenched and his air menacing.

"Why not bring the coachman in?" asked Julian. "Or is he one of your tribe?" He smiled sourly. "Don't you know by now that a clergyman keeps his gold in heaven, and as for me . . ." He thrust his hand into his pocket and threw the George penny on to the table. "There's my fortune and you are welcome to it."

The burly ruffian who guarded Julian caught him a stinging blow across his face with the back of his hand.

"Hold your tongue, you young varmint! Speak when you're spoken to."

Julian's fists clenched. In another instant he would have sprung at the man who had struck him, but Doctor King's agonized voice cut in: "Don't, Julian, don't!"

The men were all chuckling amongst themselves. They watched with some satisfaction that blood was dripping from Julian's cut lip and spattering his clean cravat. The leader turned and eyed Doctor King savagely.

"It's the old cock we're after, mates. Search him—strip him if need be."

Two men advanced upon Doctor King. They put their hands roughly on to his shoulders and shook him.

"What have you got that we want?" asked one of them. "Come on, give it over nicely. It's better than dying of the ague."

"I have nothing!" protested Doctor King. "A guinea or two, a few shillings, maybe. They're yours if they will serve you anything."

The leader pressed his pistol against the clergyman's chest.

"You know what we want, and we're not wasting time. Out with it."

The men were bullies and they rather relished the thought of baiting an elderly man. There was not much danger from the likes of him. Even the burly man whose job it was to look after Julian was rapt in attention on what was taking place. Doctor King was protesting, taking his long purse out of his pocket, tipping his money into the palm of his hand and holding it out for the men to take. But they were sneering and laughing and demanding something else.

Julian, pressed up against the table, wondered what was in the wind. There was a mystery somewhere. These fellows were not behaving like ordinary cut-throat highwaymen. There was a sort of latent discipline amongst them, and they showed no inclination to take the doctor's proffered money.

The leader of the men was asking a string of questions, which Doctor King appeared to be answering but not at all to their satisfaction. Why had he come this way? Why did he travel at night? Where was he going to? What time did he expect to arrive?

"I can tell you nothing—nothing, except what I have said," repeated Doctor King.

"You know what we want and we're going to have it," menaced the leader.

The burly man moved a step forward to get a better view of the fun. In his oafish way he had forgotten his guarding job. Julian saw his opportunity and took it in a flash. He reached out, grabbed the lantern from the table and brought it down with a crash on the fellow's head. The flaming oil spurted out, singeing his whiskers, while the force of the blow knocked him half silly. He gave a yell of anguish but it died on his lips, for Julian swung up his foot and kicked him fair and square in the pit of the stomach. The room had been plunged into darkness. Somebody struck a flint and tinder and amidst a volley of oaths and curses a light flamed. And by that light Julian just had time to catch sight of a pistol extended towards him. He grabbed the wrist that held it, knocked the barrel up and twisted the weapon free. He pulled the trigger—there was a flash, a report and a scream of pain. Somebody fired back and a slug whistled close to his ear and thudded into the wall behind him. He ducked as another pistol fired, changed his angle and crept forward. He felt a groping hand coming out towards him; he grasped the arm, bent it back and struck wildly. Luck was with him and he hit the fellow fair in the face, for he felt a pug-nose squelch against his fist.

The leader was cursing and swearing, giving a dozen orders and yelling himself hoarse.

"Doctor King!" shouted Julian. "Doctor King! I'll look after these devils. You get to the door. Get out!"

One of the men had unhooked one of the coach lamps; holding it above his head, he came running into the room, and mistaking the leader for an enemy crashed down the light upon his head. Again all was dark.

Julian started to edge round the room, keeping his body close to the wall. The men were squealing, kicking, hitting, fighting and biting in the centre. Another pistol flashed, and the report was so close to Julian's ear that it all but deafened him. He felt dizzy and sick and fell on his knees, tripped by a prostrate body. Whilst the men fought he groped about, and fortune favoured him. There was a pistol in the fellow's belt—he pulled it out and holding the barrel in his hand he rose stealthily to his feet. The fight in the centre of the room was diminishing in violence; the men were all shouting out that they were friends and yelling for the discovery of their quarry.

The leader's voice was silent. Probably he had been knocked out, and the men without him were without direction.

Julian could see the glimmer of the doorway. He moved stealthily forward—five yards—four yards—two yards. He was right on the cornice now, and a vague figure rushed at him. He cracked down his pistol-butt where he thought the head would be, missed and struck the shoulder, but the blow was shrewd enough and the fellow started to howl with pain. Julian grabbed out and found himself holding a hat in his hand, whilst the body toppled and slithered to the ground, shouting for mercy from a batta of well-planted kicks which landed on the shin. Like a greased eel Julian slipped

forward. He made the door-post and rounded the lintel. A pistol fired and he felt a stinging pain which sliced across his left side from back to chest. Only a flesh wound, but the blood was soaking his clothing. He staggered forward into the cool fresh air, and saw ahead the glimmer of the coach and by its light the pair of horses of the mounted men tethered to the toll-gate.

The fight and confusion in the cottage was continuing. If they had horses they would follow, that was certain. Julian crept forward and reached the chargers. He slipped their reins from the post and moving round behind gave them two wallops across the croups which sent the beasts neighing and bolting away.

"Doctor King!" he shouted. "Doctor King!"

"Here, Julian. I'm here," called back the doctor.

"Where?" asked Julian.

"In the coach! The coach!" answered the doctor hoarsely.

Julian sprang across towards the coach. He leapt on to the box, found the reins and shook them out, and at the same instant the attackers, cursing and threatening, ran out from the cottage. They attempted to form a cordon across the road and stop the coach, but the horses were moving forward, and it is a brave man who will stand in front of a pair of horses with a determined man on the box. Right into the middle of them Julian urged the coach-horses. The men gave on either side and scattered. He stood up on the box and, using the ends of the reins as a whip, smacked right and left until he roused the hacks into a gallop. They charged down the road, the coach near upsetting a dozen times. Behind, the men were shouting their lungs out. Two slugs whistled unpleasantly close and other pistol-shots followed. Julian looked back and saw the glimmer of a lantern. He took a pistol-shot directly at it. There was a yell of pain and the lantern went out. At the same moment the horses, with equine surefootedness, lurched to the left and brought the coach more by good luck than good management safely round a nasty bend.

Julian left nothing to chance. He wanted a much further distance between him and those cut-throats before he slackened the speed. Doctor King was leaning back against the cushions. His face was very white and drawn and he swayed from side to side with the violent rocking of the coach.

"Well done, Julian—well done!" he kept murmuring, but Julian had no time for compliments. There was always the chance of another horseman to take into consideration, and they were now completely unarmed. He wondered how long his horses could keep up this pace and whether the traces and shafts would hold. The surface of the road was becoming better. What had been a grass-covered track had now some semblance of a carriageway. The night was becoming less dark and a lightening on the horizon heralded the moon would shortly rise.

Doctor King had sufficiently recovered to look about him. He leant forward and pulled at Julian's coat-tails. He had recognized the contour of the land and knew his whereabouts. Julian slackened speed, and the doctor stood up and shouted to him through the airlet. They were close to Wrotham and he picked out the hilly country. The whole plot was now plain to him. The people who had engineered the hold-up had sent a bogus coachman.

The story about Ned Squires and the lumbago was a fairy-tale. They had trusted to Doctor King's gullibility and the plot had worked. Once he was in the coach the driver had turned away on to the old road which skirted Borough Green and had driven to the prearranged rendezvous.

"But where are we now?" demanded Julian, allowing the horses to slow down to a walk.

"Keep straight on," said Doctor King, "and just round the coppice on the left we come in with the Maidstone-Wrotham turnpike. If I remember rightly, about two hundred yards along it is the King's Head Inn, and there we will find a friend."

"Good!" said Julian. He was beginning to feel very tired; the excitement had kept him up, but now he felt sick and dizzy. He dropped his hand to feel his left side and his fingers came away sticky. He knew that he was bleeding profusely and that was bringing on the weakness.

"What's the matter?" asked Doctor King anxiously.

"One of the balls hit me," explained Julian. "It's only a skin wound by the feel of it, cut across the flesh so to speak, but it is bleeding hard."

"Can you keep on for ten minutes more?" asked Arnold King. "When we get to the 'King's Head' we will be all right. Tom Trent is the host and he's the finest horse leech in the country, and what's more he treats men as well as he does horses. He's a friend, Julian, and we'll be safe with him."

With an effort Julian pulled himself together. The horses went plodding on and dimly shadowing in the night the coppice stood silhouetted. The axles creaked over uneven ground and the wheels dropped deep into the ruts. Each jolt was an agony to Julian; the blood from his wound was caking and tearing at the open flesh.

"The road," said Doctor King. "The road. Now swing them to the left."

The horses' hooves clattered on to firm cobbles. Julian gave them a smack across the croups and they jogged into an unwilling trot. Ahead of them, like a will-o'-the-wisp, a light glimmered.

"There it is," shouted Doctor King. "The 'King's Head'. It's there right enough. The 'King's Head'."

With the greatest effort Julian swung the horses round off the road and into the courtyard of the inn.

"Rein in!" shouted Doctor King. "Rein in, Julian. Good boy! Good boy!"

The horses came to a stop. Vaguely and mistily Julian saw lights flickering and heard a voice of the man calling. Doctor King sang out the answer.

"All right, Tom Trent! It is I—Doctor King."

"Then welcome to you," called back Trent. "I'll be down in a moment."

Julian felt his body swaying. He made a frantic effort to steady himself. Everything was going very black and before his eyes was a flickering red through which he could not see. He felt himself falling—falling—falling, and as if from nowhere strong arms reached up and gripped him tightly.

Julian had been unconscious—his mind was in oblivion, and then vaguely into it came dim figures and sounds. The rumble of carriage wheels, the crack of discharging pistols, and the shouts of men. The scene changed again, everything was very quiet, and distantly he could hear the voices of men talking. Doctor King's voice speaking calmly and quietly.

A sudden smarting pain tore at his side. He winced and shouted and came back to earth.

"A drop of good gin," said Tom Trent. "I tell you, Doctor, there's nothing like a drop of London gin to clean a wound. Aye, the stitches are nicely set—he'll do at that."

Julian lay very still.

"You say you didn't want this young fellow to come with you?" came the voice of Trent. "Seems to me a mighty good job he did. Why do you think they set on you?"

"Not difficult to work out, Tom," said Doctor King, and his voice to Julian sounded normal and clear. "There's something stirring and the Hanovers have got wind of it. Prince Charles is at Flushing and he has ten thousand muskets to land in England the moment there are ten thousand loyal hands to take them."

Tom Trent whistled. "There are more than ten thousand who'd like to see the Stuarts back upon the throne. When is the signal likely to be?"

"I don't know," said the doctor. "I must reach London and confer with the Earl of Primrose and the other leaders. The Hanoverians had me turned out of the living of Ightham—they got the Primate of all England to do that; but that wasn't enough. They wanted to get me as well, so they knew the time I'd leave and laid their plot. Torture isn't allowed by the State of England, but remember it's legal enough in Germany and Hanover. King George isn't so squeamish when he wants information, and there are divers ways of making an old man talk."

Tom Trent shuddered, and King went on speaking. "I know of five hundred names and more, of good Jacobites in and about the Southern coast who are waiting for the word. The Hanovers would give much for that information."

"But they didn't get it," said Trent.

"No—thanks to young Brett, they didn't get it."

Julian opened his eyes for the first time. He was lying on a horsehair couch and Trent, with bowls of hot water and spirit, was kneeling by his side. He looked about him cautiously. The room was a low-ceilinged bar-parlour and on the table used glasses and tankards were standing.

"Julian," asked Doctor King, "are you better?"

Julian smiled. "I'm a bit sore and my head aches."

"You've a right to be," said Trent. "That slug's made a nasty wound in your side. A deep cut, though, thank God, your ribs were strong enough to ward it off from your vitals."

"I know," said Julian, "but you were hurting me. I didn't feel the stitches, but that spirit you poured on—"

Doctor King caught his breath. "Julian, did you hear what we were saying—what we were talking about?"

Julian nodded. "Ten thousand muskets—five hundred loyal friends of the House of Stuart. . . . So they weren't highwaymen? They were King George's men?"

A look of consternation spread over Doctor King's face.

"That's dangerous knowledge to have," snapped Tom Trent. "Hanover would give you a thousand golden guineas for that."

"Then I'm rich," said Julian.

Trent made a menacing gesture towards him. "If I'd thought you'd sell you'd never leave this place alive."

"Wait," said Doctor King. He beckoned to Trent and they moved away. They began to talk in undertones and Julian caught a word or two of what they said. He had saved the doctor from an awkward predicament, but now he himself had become a problem. What were they to do with him? He had heard too much and he knew too much, but he was not a Jacobite and a member of the Cause, and only men of free will took the pledge to the Stuarts. Tom Trent was doing the talking. His idea was that Julian should be given a sum of money and a free passage to the Americas—that could be arranged easily enough and there was money to be had for such a purpose. Moreover, a couple of good trusty Jacobites could watch him until he was safe upon the ocean and heading westwards. Doctor King was nodding his head and agreeing.

Suddenly Julian interrupted, propping himself up with some difficulty. "Doctor King—Mr. Trent, it's very kind of you to arrange my future for me, but suppose I'm not a party to it?"

Trent turned quickly and regarded him sternly. He picked up a pistol from a dresser and pulled back the hammer from the powder-pan. He was pointing it at Julian as he advanced.

"See here, young fellow, I've got a motto—Dead men tell no tales, and traitors are better dead."

Julian sighed. "Dear Mr. Trent, what a fellow you are to jump to conclusions! Here am I, a wounded man, and you've repaired me. Now you're making plans for me and you're not even asking me what I want to do."

"You've no right to be asked," said Trent.

"Julian! Julian!" implored Doctor King.

"I feel very ill," said Julian, "and not a bit like an argument. I'd rather go to sleep than continue this discussion, but all the same I think we must understand each other." He started to cough with the exertion of talking, and the effort hurt him. "I like your company, Mr. Trent, and your straightforward business. Also, Doctor King is my friend and benefactor. But to be pitchforked willy-nilly to the Americas when I have a fixed idea in my head that the streets of London are paved with gold is a little disappointing."

"Julian, there is no alternative," protested Doctor King. "You know I love you as a son, but, save my Faith, the Cause is dearer to me than anything in this world."

Julian smiled towards the doctor. "Thank you, sir." He shifted his glance to Trent. "I have often told the doctor I search excitement and that I mean to carve out a future for myself."



Trent shook his head. He thought Julian was delirious, and that the wound had turned him light-headed.

"Before you shoot me, if that is your intention," said Julian, "I wonder if I might crave a glass of brandy."

"Brandy?" snapped Trent. "What do you want brandy for?"

"A foible of a sick man."

"Give it to him, Tom," ordered Doctor King.

Trent walked across to the shelves, took down a bottle of brandy, pulled the stopper out and poured out a good measure into a glass. He came back and put it into Julian's hand.

"Here you are," he said.

Julian looked thoughtfully at the glass.

A silence fell. Julian was looking at the spirit, twisting the glass stem slowly in his fingers as if weighing up a thousand pros and cons. Suddenly he made up his mind. He stretched out the hand that held the glass and with an unmistakable gesture carried it over the bowl of steaming water from which Tom Trent had made his dressing. The sweep was continuous and at the end of it the glass came back to Julian's lips. He looked towards Doctor King.

"Doctor, I have a toast. I hope for a novice I make it with the right ritual. I drink to the 'King over the water'."

He drained the glass and with an effort threw it to shatter on the flagstones.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A MAN WITH THE STRANGEST HAT

THE Lady Angela Primrose discovered that life in London and Society could be attractive. In the fastnesses of Scotland her Aunt Flora had warned her against the terrors and pitfalls and Dominie Armstrong had likened the metropolis to the pit of iniquity. However, Angela realized to her satisfaction that such terrors were unfounded. These Londoners appeared to be a happy, pleasure-loving, if somewhat noisy and idling, community, and the ogre vice she had heard so much about managed to keep himself and his minions well hidden.

Lady Primrose on the spur of necessity had made her daughter adopt the height of fashion. And from this foible had come her engagement to the dour Earl of Cooper. She had obeyed her parents' wishes and changed herself from a natural, studious and somewhat thoughtful girl into a young lady of the *haut monde*, and having been thus transformed she saw to it that she should have all finery as became her new circumstances. She was the daughter of an earl and affianced to another earl, so obviously she must look

the part. Thus she explained the situation to her father, received his sanction and started on a wave of extravagant buying which left both the Earl and Countess of Primrose breathless. There arrived at Primrose House an endless stream of dresses, hats, petticoats, wigs, shoes, cloaks, mantles, stockings, corsets and other articles of feminine attire. The bills and notes were all tactfully attached for his lordship's attention, who, finding it necessary to dip his hand deeper and deeper into his well-lined purse, protested dismally and called his wife to his assistance, when it was resolved that Angela should be 'carpeted'. The interview took place immediately after their daughter's return from taking horse exercise on her beloved Champion in Hyde Park.

The Lady Angela was wearing an Amazon riding habit of bottle-green velvet and a laced tricorne hat of the same shade perched high upon her extravagantly curled hair, which was *au naturel*. Boulter informed her immediately on her return that his lordship and her ladyship awaited her in the library, and Angela went elegantly to confront them. She found her father seated at the table, a whole pile of bills in front of him and with a strained expression on his face. Her mother was standing just behind him looking arrogant and severe. The discussion started, there was much talk of extravagance, of waste of money and two-fisted spending. Angela waited until their joint censure was finished.

"I am sorry," she said quietly, "that you should think this way of my attempts to be a great lady and a suitable match for Lord Cooper. You have told me that what I do is in the greatest service of our Cause. Surely you would not deny me a few frills and flounces to ease my sacrifice."

After such a declaration the interview languished. Angela strode out of the library, flicking her riding whip arrogantly against her booted leg.

Lord Primrose vented his displeasure with a fashionable oath, but Mary, on the other hand, found herself secretly amused at her daughter's spirit. Arthur was as well breeched as any peer in Britain, and this tendency of his towards parsimony had caused her personal annoyance before that day.

Two hours later Angela, powdered, patched and dressed in the highest of fashion, a complete transformation from her former self, came down from her chamber. Her mother happened upon her in the hall and demanded what entertainment took her out that evening. And this not without some reason, for her daughter's engagements were so numerous Lady Primrose had all but lost track of them.

Angela flicked a fan coquettishly and smiled. Had darling Mother forgotten Lady Westmorland was chaperoning her to Lady Strange's rout? William was to be there and therefore it was essential that she should be present to be at the side of her fiancé.

There was a sting in Angela's voice as she spoke. She did not and could not love Lord Cooper, and she wished her parents to fully appreciate this fact. William was arrogant, cruel, dispassionate and conceited. She felt that they should also make some sacrifice in this proposed *mariage de convenance*.

Lady Primrose tried to speak lightly. "My dear," she said sweetly, "you are teaching William almost to become a Tory. Fancy his going to Lady Strange's, and Sir Robert one of our foremost Jacobite friends!"

Angela blew a kiss with a mittened hand, and, with a frou-frou of skirts and petticoats, descended to the portico, where her sedan chair waited. Boulter saw her into it and closed the door. The chairmen lifted up and with their cry of "Give way!" they trotted off up Essex Street.

Angela peeped out of the window and saw that the door of Primrose House was shut, then she leant forward and called to the leading chairman.

"Charles."

"Yes, my lady."

"Take me to Catherine Street," she ordered.

"In Covent Garden, madam?"

"Yes."

Chairmen of the eighteenth century were taciturn beings—their silence was golden, and Charles and his mate were the same as the best of them. They trotted along with the chair, turned into the Strand and turned right to go with slowing pace up the hill to Covent Garden. They knew well enough the house which the Lady Angela required, and in another minute or so they set down her chair before it and rang lustily on the hand-bell.

A moment later Molly Mills, a large buxom woman who was Mrs. Bette Hilton's personal maid, appeared in the doorway.

"Your ladyship!" she greeted. "This is an unexpected pleasure. The mistress, madam? Why, she was just getting ready to go to the theatre, but I expect she will be only too pleased to give you a few minutes."

She ushered Angela up the stairs and into a large reception room. Here she left her and a moment later Bette Hilton appeared.

"Lady Angela," greeted Bette, "what brings you here at this time?"

She was wearing a negligée and obviously her toilet had been interrupted. She walked across to the fire and warmed her fingers at the blazing logs.

"What a life!" she cooed. "All day long I have been posing for Mr. Hogarth, and that's a cold business if ever there was. These artists never seem to consider that their models are of flesh and blood—no, rather that they are god-like creatures made of flesh-tinted alabaster specially sent for their convenience. And now I must go to the theatre. Mr. Garrick has called a rehearsal of a special scene." She changed the subject abruptly. "Laugh with me, my dear, your cousin Guy has proposed to me for the fifty-sixth time and I have refused him. He is certainly persistent." She sighed and sat down, displaying much of her well-formed bosom.

"Well?" she asked. "You look very pretty and quite the belle of the ball. Lady Strange's tonight, I am sure? But what brings you here? Not a poetry lesson but something much nearer to the heart, eh?"

Angela nodded. "Yes, Bette, I'm in trouble. William Cooper—you know him better than I do, don't you?"

"Tut! Tut!" said Mrs. Hilton. "What an admission!"

Angela took no notice of the interruption. "I can't bring myself to love him. I know this engagement has only existed for a very few days, but already I'm frightened of him. He is so cold and calculating and I want happiness so much. It seems that I'm acting a play and portraying a part that doesn't suit me. You know Guy so well, and Guy is always with William. I come to ask you a truth, if you will give it to me."

"What's that?" asked Bette.

"Do you know William's real intentions towards me? Why doesn't he marry a girl of his own kind, of the same politics, age and outlook? Why must he choose me? He can't be sincere any more than I am."

Bette Hilton pursed her lips. "Shall I tell you something, my lady?"

"Please call me Angela."

Bette flushed and looked pleased at the invitation.

"William never does anything without a reason. He is made that way. You are part of the scheme—his scheme. My dear, but why do you fret about it? Accept Society as it is today. You'll marry, rapidly become pregnant, retire and bear a child. If you are fortunate, it will be a boy. If unfortunate, you will have to try again. Don't bring love into it, it is purely physical and necessary, the gymnastic of producing an heir so that a title can go on." She sighed. "Angela, you are the only daughter of a very rich man. He is a great peer, even if his politics and position are a little unfortunate. Cooper needs an heiress—he twists the screw a little and my lord Primrose surrenders his only daughter to save his neck."

Angela winced. "But that isn't true! These Hanovers are not going to be on the throne for ever. There's the King over the water, and he has many and powerful friends."

"Then what are you frightened of?" asked Bette.

"That William will force me to marry him before the coup takes place. I couldn't bear that. My body is not a Cooper-producing machine—it's young and virile and romantic. Do you understand? You are so clever, Bette. What can I do?"

Bette thought for a moment. "Hurt his pride," she said. "Compromise yourself with another man and let him know what you have done. Arrogance is a house of cards; pull away one little pasteboard at the bottom and the whole edifice will collapse."

Molly Mills appeared in the doorway, a veritable mountain of anxiety. Time was running short and Mr. David Garrick was never one to be kept waiting. Mrs. Hilton must away to the theatre at once, for the Muse would never wait upon nobility.

Bette sighed and rose to her feet. "Well, my dear, there it is. Take comfort and no chances."

She ushered Angela to the door and Mills was ready to take charge of her and put her into her chair. When the chair had moved away Mills came waddling back to Mrs. Hilton.

"Well, my dear, what was all that about?" she said, with the familiarity she used when they were alone together.

Bette shrugged her shoulders. "A woman who does not love a man—oh, there are only two sides in this world. A woman who does not love a man she has to marry and a woman who loves the man she can't marry."

Mills blew her fat cheeks. "You're not thinking of Sir Guy Stanley, by any chance, are you, dear? A fine young gentleman if ever there was, and I've heard tell one of the nicest rent-rolls in the whole of England. You may give him a year or two, but what does that matter? Look at yourself in the mirror. There never was a finer than Bette Hilton."

"Hold your tongue, you old gossip !" snapped Bette. She turned away and went quickly across the hall into her bed-chamber and slammed the door behind her.

Lady Strange's rout was a bore ; just one of those affairs which, despite unlimited expense, failed to amuse the Society which had gathered. The supper was, of course, excellent ; the musicians played well ; there were cards and conversation ; but the entertainment never reached the full swing of enjoyment. Of course, this may have been because the season was late and Society was satiated with *conversazioni*, parties and entertainments. Lady Strange was one for innovations—she prided herself on that fact and the whole idea of her rout was to ask the young people to the exclusion of the elders. She felt that in the presence of Mamas and Papas the young idea and ideals were somewhat cramped. However, she discovered to her chagrin that it was the elders who must provide the major part of the conversation and the witticisms, and that these youthful guests of hers were little better than frightened sheep who moved about in a flock and refused to devise their own amusement.

To Angela Primrose the Strange party was even more dismal. Paramount in her mind was the advice which Bette Hilton had given her. These words of wisdom, brutal as they were, had made her see Cooper in quite a different light, whilst her mental distress was added to by a physical one. The French corsets which she had bought from Rouflé only the day before, and which were assured the latest contraption in figure-moulding, irked her indescribably. William Cooper arrived late. He had been kept in protracted consultation with Mr. Pelham, the Prime Minister, and when, with the right of a fiancé, he annexed Angela from the guardianship of Lady Westmorland, it was not to compliment her upon her toilet but rather to pour out in an ambiguous and indefinite manner all the troubles and tribulations of the Government as they especially affected himself. Moreover, he went to great pains to prove how important and essential he was to King George. In fact, it seemed that the King entirely owed his present position and would have to rely for his future upon the goodwill and unspared efforts of his Solicitor-General.

Angela found herself bored. She did not wish to be impressed, she wanted to be flattered, and she wondered if William could flatter anybody except himself. And besides, all this ambiguity was hardly complimentary to her. She put a direct question.

"Has anything gone wrong with the 'Broad Bottom' Administration, William?" she asked.

Cooper regarded his silk stockings and his pumps for a moment. They had found a couch in the portrait gallery and were sitting together. Unfortunately, they were a long way from the nearest fire and the material of Angela's gown was not of the warmest.

"Of course there's nothing wrong!" he snapped. "Only these fool Jacobites with their silly pettifogging ideas of revolution. Hang the lot, that's what I say—hang the lot!"

She quizzed him thoughtfully. "William," she said slowly. "You don't mean to say that one of these wicked Jacobites has slipped out of your grasp and is cocking snooks at the 'Broad Bottom'?"

He glared at her. "I dislike women who talk politics."

She parried defiantly. "Then why hint politics if I may not discuss them with you, William? You forget that a woman has brains. She has other uses than being bedded and toileted like a doll."

"You talk like a strumpet," he snapped. "My dear Angela, when we are married I shall insist upon certain changes. You have an independence of spirit which is most provocative and does not suit you."

"When we are married," said Angela slowly. "Why, William, we have only just become engaged."

"My dear," said William graciously, and recovering a superficial charm, "I am not in favour of long engagements—they are very irksome, and cause physical disadvantages. This is a material age, and, besides, there is another factor."

"What's that?" she asked sweetly.

Cooper pursed his lips. "I think it would be as well if our marriage should be solemnized as soon as possible. It might be a means of preventing your father from making an unutterable fool of himself."

She sprang angrily to her feet. "How dare you say that about my father?"

Cooper eyed her solemnly, his eyes fixed upon the twinkling of the large brilliant of her engagement ring, and swept upwards over her young figure to her face.

"You're a pretty little thing," he said. "Yes, I do like the dress you're wearing. Your hair style is quite exquisite, and those new patches are simply provocative. A pity that you wear them on the Tory side. Something else I must change."

"Answer my question," demanded Angela tartly. "How dare you make a remark like that about my father?"

Lord Cooper rose languidly and offered her his arm. She breathed a silent prayer of thanks that there was to be no kissing or fondling.

"Inside information, my dear Angela—inside information," he said soothingly. "A little word of warning from a man in the know."

Angela shrugged her shoulders. "How nice to be in the know, William! Of course, if you Whigs have made up your minds to remove my father's head from his shoulders, there will naturally follow a prolonged period of mourning which would seriously hold up any question of my marriage. And, besides, I don't like threats, however charmingly they may be veiled. I'm feeling a little tired. Will you take me back to Lady Westmorland?"

After that there was nothing that Angela could do save to take Lady Westmorland into her confidence, explain how tiresome William had been, plead a headache and make her apologies to her hostess at leaving so early.

Cooper tried to insist that he walk her home; that was to say, perambulate elegantly at the side of her chair and engage her in conversation. However, this Angela was able to decline, and the arrival unexpectedly of the Lord Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor, made him forget his fiancée in a desire to dance political attendance upon the occupier of the Woolsack.

Angela had never been so grateful in her life to see the ponderous Lord Hardwicke. The major-domo summoned her chair and placed her into it,

for now Cooper was far too busy with the Lord Chancellor even to pay her this slight courtesy.

Lady Strange's house was in the Mall and soon they were passing by the Charing Cross and entering the mouth of the Strand. The Watch were calling the hour of the night and their lanthorns provided the only light in the desolate empty street, where a fitful wind eddied and swirled amidst the refuse and garbage. A harlot was screaming abuse at a drunken man who would not pay her price, and a child, forlorn and hopeless, was weeping in a doorway.

Angela stopped her chair, called this pathetic creature to her and gave it a shilling with instructions that it was to eat forthwith and pay the price of its lodging. The brat was so dirty and ragged she had no idea as to its sex.

The chair moved on again. They reached the Aldwych and skirted St. Clement Danes. "Oranges and lemons—oranges and lemons." The little song came into Angela's mind; she found herself humming it, almost amused. Bette Hilton was a clever woman; she was glad her mother had permitted her to take elocution lessons from her. She did not care so much about the poetry, but Bette could teach her something of the ways of the world. That idea of hurting Cooper's pride—what an interesting thought! She remembered the harlot screaming abuse at the drunken man. There was, after all, a comparison, and she shuddered.

Boulter had gone to bed when she arrived at Primrose House, but the faithful Evans and a footman were there to let her in.

"His lordship and her ladyship?" she enquired.

Evans grew confidential. "Doctor King has arrived from Ightham," she whispered. "Yes, my lady, the Reverend Doctor King. There's something astir, but I don't know what it is—her ladyship said expressly that she was not to be disturbed. Grooms have been sent post-haste to bring His Grace the Duke of Beaufort and Lord Graham."

"What! At this time of night?"

By now they had reached the top of the staircase. They walked along the balcony and came to the great corridor. Angela entered her bedroom and sat down on the chair before her mirror.

"Unhook me, Evans," she ordered, "and take me down."

"Very good, my lady."

Evans began her maidening and in a few minutes Angela was ready for bed. She examined herself closely in the mirror. Her natural hair was tucked roguishly into a night-cap, and her face was cleaned of pomade, rouge and patches.

"Oh, Evans!" she sighed, as she pushed her feet over the smooth sheets to the bottom of her bed. "If only we could be a little more natural! If only Shakespeare had not said 'All the world's a stage'!" She snuggled her head against the pillow and signed to the maid to snuff the candles.

. . . . .

In the library the other candles twinkled and guttered in their holders. Lord Graham had arrived and hard on his heels came the Duke of Beaufort.

They sat on either side of Lord Primrose and sipped sparingly from their long-stemmed glasses. At the other end of the table Doctor King had taken up his position, and Lady Primrose, looking drawn and tired, sat on his right. They had listened for more than an hour to Doctor King's tale. There had been questions and answers, suppositions and deductions, but no final conclusion had been arrived at.

"Arnold, you think that this was a definite plot, either to kidnap you or to take your life?" asked Mary Primrose.

Doctor King was emphatic. "I can see no other reason for it. After all, let us examine everything as it took place. I was inhibited from St. Mary's, Ightham, by order of the Primate; such orders only come from the Government."

"I agree to that," said Lord Graham. "Remember what Westmorland told about seeing that precious prospective son-in-law of yours on the Canterbury road?"

Primrose winced, and the Duke of Beaufort chuckled behind his hand.

"Haven't we already discussed my daughter's relations with Lord Cooper?" snapped Lady Primrose.

"Of course we have, *ad nauseam*," said Beaufort, and helped himself to a further glass of port. "Do you want me to drink happiness to the bride?" His sarcasm fell flat.

"You see," said Doctor King, "the Hanoverians would know that I would leave Ightham that night—that was the order. They sent a bogus coachman—they took me along a little-used road and right into the trap they had set. But for the grace of God I should not be here to speak with you."

The Duke of Beaufort chuckled. "But for the grace of God and the strong arm of a young gentleman named Julian Brett, your reverence?"

"Julian Brett," said Primrose slowly. "A lusty young man, from your description. You say he was wounded?"

"Not seriously," said Doctor King. "Old Trent, the horse-leech, declares he will be right as a trivet in another day. He has youth on his side, a magnificent constitution and the power of healing."

"What's his price?" asked Lady Primrose acidly.

Doctor King started, he looked searchingly round the table and his eyes finally fixed themselves upon Primrose.

"His price," said Lord Primrose. "If you would come to earth, Arnold, you'd see the logic of what my wife has said. Every man has his price, and if a young fellow with no prospects risks his life, fights a battle, extricates the Reverend Doctor King from a most unpleasant position, and receives a pistol-wound for his pains, he obviously expects some reward."

"Unless, of course, he sells us to the Hanoverians," said Beaufort sourly.

"He would not do that," declared Doctor King vehemently. "He has taken the pledge to the Cause."

"Interesting," said Lord Graham. "What comes next?"

"I have told him to proceed to London," explained Doctor King. "He is anxious to obtain an occupation which holds out prospects." He paused meaningly. "I was wondering if you, Arthur, had anything to suggest, after the demise of the poor and lamented Sharpe."



"Ye gods!" ejaculated His Grace. "His reward shall be in heaven, eh, Parson King? Arthur's lost three couriers in as many months to the pistols of these Hanoverian pursuivants. So you suggest rewarding this young fellow Brett by sending him knocking on Peter's Gate?"

All eyes turned towards Primrose. He fiddled with his snuff-box, snuffed heavily and sneezed violently.

"Ooh!" cried Lady Primrose.

"I was thinking," said Lord Primrose with difficulty, "that we must not be too precipitate. It would be better to think this matter over very carefully, to weigh up the pros and cons and in due course to arrive at our decision."

Lord Graham was more practical. "Doctor, you say this fellow talks French pretty well? He learnt some of the lingo at Oxford, didn't he? Communications must be kept open with the Continent, and that's Primrose's pigeon. Leave him to pluck it and cook it."

"That is exactly what I was about to suggest," agreed Doctor King. "Mr. Brett prides himself on being a materialist—he also states that he is a soldier of fortune. We know that he can use a sword excellently and I can vouch first hand for his shooting with musket and pistol. He rides a horse well, and though through an unfortunate circumstance he was not able to complete his studies and take his degree at Oxford University—"

Beaufort started to chuckle again. "Doctor, did you intend this militant paragon of virtues for the Church?"

"But what about his birth?" said Primrose evasively.

"Damn his birth!" said Beaufort. "Be content that he was born with two arms, two legs, two eyes and a brain. I am thinking of his life and how he can use it in our interest."

Primrose protested weakly. "Gentlemen, I must decide who enters my household. Please allow me to make my decision in such a personal matter."

Lady Primrose eyed her husband deprecatingly. "Dear, dear," she said, and stifled a yawn. "We must allow Arthur to make up his mind. Perhaps I can assist him." She rose wearily to her feet. "Gentlemen, may I bid you good night? We all have beds to go to. Doctor King is staying here." She smiled towards him and put out her hand. "Let me show you to your room, Arnold. It's the one you always have. All the same, I'll pay you that little courtesy."

"Thank you, my dear," said Doctor King. "Thank you. Good night, my lords. God be with you."

He rose to his feet and followed Lady Primrose to the door.

Graham was pulling on his gloves and Beaufort had lifted up his greatcoat from a chair and was hoisting himself into it.

"I take it," he said sarcastically, "as we are conspirators against His Hanoverian Majesty, that we shall play the part—the garden gate, in fact. Come on, John, my boy." He pushed his arm through Graham's. "Come on, Jacobites, sleep as well as Hanoverians."

Primrose opened the french window for them. They passed out on to the terrace.

"Don't forget that young fellow Brett," said Beaufort. "He seems a

likely sort of person for the job. King's a good man at character, you know."

"Good night," said Lord Graham, "and I hope I don't break my damned neck over those rose-beds of yours, Arthur. You ought to have a lantern handy to help us with this conspirator business, it's becoming a habit."

. . . . .

As a rule the Primrose household did not rise early. True, the servants were early astir—at least, the more menial of them—but the Countess Primrose had reached that age when it was necessary to lie long in bed to preserve face and figure and wage an unequal battle against wrinkles and crow's-feet. His lordship, on the other hand, had developed a habit of waking early and reading in bed. He felt this was the only period during his trying daily round that he and the classics might be alone together, and therefore almost with the first cock's crow he would light a candle, sit up in bed surrounded with dictionaries and primers and read Latin, Greek, or even Hebrew, with the avidity of a scholar.

Arthur's early-morning habits had very nearly caused a connubial break between Mary and himself. Her ladyship had protested loud and long at this early disturbance. She had resented the flicker of the reading candle at this unearthly hour; she vehemently detested the sharp edges of a dictionary or primer being driven into the small of her back as Arthur wriggled delightedly at the transports of Virgil, Horace or Philoxenos, and she threatened hysterics when her husband developed the habit of reading aloud those passages which moved him most.

With a breach imminent the taciturn Spence had been brought into consultation, and she had suggested the obvious solution. His lordship must be tactfully banished from the nuptial couch and given a chamber of his own. Surprisingly Arthur had agreed with alacrity. Mary had felt almost slighted at his anxiety to have a room of his own, but on second thoughts she decided, biblically, that the 'days of Arthur were ended', and left the matter at that. So Arthur had his own bed-chamber where he could iron out the more abstruse interpretations of the classics, and Mary likewise had the privacy she desired to smooth away wrinkles, crow's-feet about the eyes, or anything else that might be troubling her.

Like master, like man, the saying goes, and lying-in permeated the whole household. For Boulter timed his rising to one hour before his master, Spence did likewise, and cooks, footmen, tire-maids and house-maids followed this indulgent example.

The Lady Angela proved the exception to the rule. Her Scottish upbringing had taught her the joys of early rising, and London could not easily break her of a habit which had been so ingrained upon her at Moniaive Hall. No matter what hour she went to bed, she was awake and astir with the rising of the sun.

To Evans, who was Angela's greatest confidante, she described this as her disreputable hour. The whole was a carefully guarded secret. Her habit was to jump out of bed when she saw the first gleaming of the new day at the edges of the curtains, vigorously sponge her face with cold water, wrap

a scarf about her head and wriggle her lithe body into a brown-stuff dress, the now only remaining garment of her Scots wardrobe. She would carefully open her door and proceed carefully—shoes in hand—along the corridor, and quickly down the Great Staircase, across the hall and out into the gardens.

The whole idea was, of course, very childish, a youthful intrigue, but she felt so much of her had been moulded to her mother's will she must adopt this subterfuge to essay to preserve a character of her own. Besides, there was Champion. With her horse she could carry on a long, if one-sided, conversation. Save for his safe whinny on her approach he could not say anything, but the caress of his velvet nose and the movement of his nostrils seemed to answer satisfactorily the stream of questions she posed to him.

Besides Champion the Lady Angela had another devoted admirer in the Primrose stables. Ian Gunn had been born with the name of Macdonald, and rumour had it with good foundation as a youth he had been 'out' in the Fifteen and middle-aged in the 'Forty-five. Aye, twice he had born arms for the House of Stuart against the House of Hanover, and the wonder was how he had managed to escape the hangman's noose or Cumberland's butchers. But Ian had marvellously survived, and with the punishment of the Highland clans after the 'Forty-five he had conveniently changed the Macdonald for Gunn, and recontinued his peaceful occupation as a groom, which was in itself a strange calling for a Highlander. But he had that strange Celtic knowledge of animals and their ways; horses—dogs—cats and, in fact, any creature would trust him.

After the 'Forty-five was over the pacification became gradual, and at the first possible moment Lord Primrose sent instructions that this erstwhile Macdonald was to come to Primrose House, there to take charge of the stables, grooms and livestock. So Ian came and re-entered the Primrose service under his assumed name. He did not like London, he did not trust the Cockneys; he thought the hole population were thieves and tricksters, but his feudal attachment to Lord Primrose was such that he knew no other alternative than to obey. When he had been at Moniaive, Ian had met with the Lady Angela. It was he who had put her across her first pony, had taught her to change from astride to side-saddle riding and hooked her knee about the pummel. He had taught her how to use a rod, cast a fly—and make one, for that matter. From him she had learnt how to gaff a salmon and to net a trout and, less ladylike, to ram home a charge into a fowling piece and judge the distance of a bird on the wing.

Ian Gunn had a motto, and this he was never tired of repeating to Lady Angela: "If ye know the birds and the beasties of the field, and study their ways and inclinations, ye'll never go far in your judgment of the humans. There are good beasties and there are bad beasties, and it's same with the human kingdom, for the Lord put a deal of bran in the bran tub to get a world out of it."

When Angela wakened on the morning after Lady Strange's party she discovered that Ian Gunn's truism was turning over and over in her mind. Her thoughts turned onwards to Champion. He was to go to the smith's that morning and have a new set of shoes fitted, and she wanted to see him

before he went. Champion disliked shoeing-smiths in general and London shoeing-smiths in particular, and she felt that a carrot would be a suitable bribe for good behaviour. She jumped out of bed, sluiced her face in remarkably cold water, tied the scarf about her head and pulled herself into the brown-stuff frock. A little ruefully she looked at her reflection in the long mirror. A face without make-up and a figure that was unrestrained. Well, that was how God had meant her to be. She picked up a pair of mules and moving on her bare feet slipped noiselessly into the passage. There was nobody in the corridor, on the balcony or in the hall. She came quietly down the Great Staircase and slipped out into the garden, just in time to avoid a prowling footman. The air was very sweet and fresh and the dew was on the roses, waiting for a lazy sun to rise higher than the heavens and melt it away.

She put on her mules and started down the cinder path which led to the stables. She reached the wicket and let herself through.

"Champion!" she called. "Champion!"

Champion whinnied from his stall and she ran quickly across the yard.

"Hello, Champion," she greeted, and stroked the horse's nose. She clapped his neck whilst he nuzzled about her, searching for his tit-bit. "You're going to have new shoes today," she whispered, but Champion was much more interested in carrot. She gave him his treat and he munched contentedly.

"Do you know anything about men who are lawyers, Champion?" she asked.

Champion cocked his left ear forward and his right ear back, a sure sign that he was all attention.

"Of course you do," agreed Angela. "Well, our Lord Cooper is one of those, and I don't understand him a bit. And I'm frightened of him, and I think he uses spurs and whips and horrid things on horses."

Champion had now finished his carrot and was looking for another one.

"What do you think, Champion?"

Champion blew his nose violently.

"I thought so," she said. "But what are we going to do about it—you and I? I don't want to be turned into a sort of apparatus for making Cooper babies."

Champion, who was not that sort of a horse, had obviously no opinions to advance upon procreation. Moreover, he had evidently come to the conclusion that the possibility of another carrot was extremely remote.

Angela moved in alongside him, pulled his rug more securely on to his back and tightened his girth. She wondered where Ian Gunn might be.

"Where's Ian?" she asked.

Champion snorted. He started to patter about with his feet, a sure indication that he was tired of this inactivity and wanted to stretch his legs. He did this, moreover, at the exact moment when Angela was retying the end of his halter, and a sudden jerk of the horse's head tore the rope out of her hands. The next moment Champion was away, the door of the stable was open, there was nothing to stop him. Whilst the other horses lethargically looked on, he trotted arrogantly out of the yard.

"Come back, Champion! Whoa, lad! Whoa!" shouted Angela.

The noise and the clatter brought the heads of the stable-boys peering out of the lofts. There was her young ladyship and the big roan out in the yard and the big roan not taking a bit of notice of her.

Champion sniffed the air with evident enjoyment. He tossed his head and whinnied, and performed a little dance with his feet.

"Come back, Champion! Whoa there! Stop!" shouted Angela, and made a grab for the trailing end of the halter. This effort to take him back into captivity goaded Champion into action. He had no desire to return to his stall, he wanted more carrots and a lot of other things besides, whilst his unaccustomed freedom presented plentiful opportunities. He started to trot down the yard.

"Champion!" cried Lady Angela, forgetting all the decorum of a reigning *débutante*. "Champion!"

The horse did not take the slightest notice. His trot increased to a canter and he went down the yard in fine style.

Lady Angela picked up her skirts and ran after him, shouting as she went, but her voice only resulted in increasing his pace and he took the corner from the stable into Essex Street at a speed which would have done justice to any Newmarket thoroughbred.

Angela reached the corner and ran out into the street. Champion had stopped and was looking back at her. Obviously, he considered this was a game which the two of them could play. The whole situation was becoming ridiculous, and Angela was more than a little nervous. If her mother should see her there would be trouble; the scarf about her head had slipped and her hair was falling down her back. The mules on her feet were in no way designed for rapid movement and she had already trodden upon the hem of her skirt, and this trailed behind her in the most undignified manner. But she made up her mind whatever happened she would catch her horse. He had now arrived at the corner of Essex Street and the Strand and was thoughtfully surveying the scene. Fortunately, there was little traffic, but equally unfortunately there were no passers-by in evidence who could catch him and hold him until she came up.

"Champion!" she scolded. "I'll never give you another carrot or apple or anything! You're the most ungrateful horse in the whole of London."

These threats had no effect. The horse evidently thought that the Strand presented better opportunities than Essex Street. There was, in fact, a coster's barrow laden with vegetables, freshly brought from Covent Garden, which invited his inspection. He ambled across, selected and nibbled another carrot. Moreover, he did not do this very delicately, for he pushed violently with his nose and tipped a good deal of the produce on to the street. The coster saw what was happening and let forth a string of oaths which all but spun the weathercock on St. Clement Danes. The fellow lashed out with a heavy hawthorn stick which he carried and caught Champion in the flanks. The horse retaliated as only a high-spirited horse could do—by trying to kick him. The kick was a failure so far as the coster was concerned, but it landed fair and square on the edge of the barrow, lifted it bodily and threw the whole contents of carrots, turnips, lettuces, cabbages, and the whole gamut of garden produce, in a cascade all over the street. The clatter of the overturning

barrow, the falling vegetables and the oaths of the coster startled Champion considerably. He started off at full gallop up the Strand and headed towards Westminster.

The coster evidently realized that this dishevelled and shouting female had something to do with the horse. He wished to mix matters with her, but Angela did not intend to wait for anyone. She was off after Champion as hard as she could go, her skirts held high almost to her knees, shouting at the top of her lungs for the horse to stop.

"Stop him!" she shouted. "Stop him! Stop him!" But there was nobody in sight to stop him. There were no early birds astir. The street was deserted and Angela's pleadings fell on barren ground.

Suddenly the unexpected happened. Champion, with Angela some hundred yards behind him, had reached the corner of Charles Street. Here he stopped and stood sniffing the air; a waft of the fruit and vegetable produce had reached his nostrils and he appeared to be in a dilemma as to whether to continue down the Strand or turn right and go up the incline to Covent Garden. He stole a cautious glance over his shoulder to make sure that Angela was still at a safe distance.

An unguarded moment, and in that same instant a young man appeared. He was a tall young man, dressed neatly, if rustically, in brown. He wore breeches and short riding boots with coloured tops, a heavy greatcoat, a white stock and his brown hair peruked and secured with a bow at the back of his neck, but unpowdered. However, the most remarkable thing about this tall, attractive, fine figure of a young man was his hat. Certainly this was the most extraordinary piece of headgear that could ever have been imagined as part of the confection. The hat was a tricorn, very turned up at the edges and very small in build, and it was at least four sizes too small for the wearer. The hat was old, the lace was faded and the style was long since passed, though it had something of a military flavour, whilst in every aspect the rest of the clothing of the wearer established that he was essentially a civilian.

If Angela had not been so distraught over the recapture of Champion and the possible repercussions of her escapade at Primrose House she would have laughed aloud at this incongruous spectacle. However, she summed up the situation and decided upon another action. The young man, despite his strange hat, was a potential ally, and what was more he stood a great deal nearer to Champion than she did.

"My horse!" shouted Angela. "Please, sir, could you catch my horse for me? If you please, sir, my horse. He has escaped from me, sir."

Her words poured out one after another and she paused breathlessly. The young man appeared to have been startled out of a reverie. He looked with astonishment, first at the horse and then at Angela.

"Your horse, madam? Why, certainly."

He took off his incongruous hat with a flourish of gallantry.

"Most certainly I will retake your horse, madam."

Champion did not understand what was passing between them. His attention was rapt upon the medley of smells which was being wafted from

Covent Garden. He had almost made up his mind to choose Charles Street; he turned his head, and in that instant he was lost. With the agility of a wild cat, the young man leapt across the road, seized the halter. For a moment there was a struggle between horse and man but obviously man was the master, for he put a nasty twist on the halter and that brought Champion to his senses.

"Madam, at your service," he said, and swept the hat from off his head.

"How can I thank you, sir?" she answered him, and felt his level eyes regarding her quizzically.

Angela felt that some explanation was necessary. "My horse, sir, he escaped me. I was feeding him a carrot and he took upon my kindness to play me this scurvy trick. I do not know what I should have done had you not come so conveniently upon the scene."

The young man nodded his head understandingly. "It is very annoying," he suggested, "to be forced to follow an escaping horse at this hour in the morning. However" he shrugged—"I have nothing to do and I was at hand." He bowed again. Champion, suddenly ducking his head, did his utmost to bite him. This was rewarded with a hard clap across the face.

"He is not usually savage," apologized Angela. "Only he is excited."

"Like mistress—like horse?" suggested the young man.

Angela felt embarrassed and turned her head away. And at the same moment caught her reflection in a casement window, and gave a gasp of horror. Her ancient stuff dress was irrevocably torn, her hair was tumbling down her back and the scarf had ceased to be a headgear and now lay, an untidy appendage, over her shoulder.

"Do I really look like that?" she demanded.

The young man smiled. "Madam, you look utterly charming and as fresh as the dawn. When a woman is unexpected in her attire or action she always increases her allurements for the opposite sex."

Angela pouted. The compliment was a little fulsome. She felt that Lady Angela Primrose should not bandy words with extraordinary young men at this hour of the morning.

"I am glad that you find pleasure in this somewhat dilapidated appearance," she challenged, "and since you have been so complimentary perhaps I may also ask a question. That hat, sir, you are wearing, it is not a part of you. I feel that you have been sadly misled or tricked into taking it in place of your own."

"My hat——" said the young man. "Oh, of course, my hat." He took it off again and regarded it. "You see, it isn't really my hat but it was the only hat available at the time. When you are fighting half a dozen men at once in a dark room, it is not always possible to choose a headgear to fit. As a matter of fact, I had no idea that this hat had become my property, but good Tom Trent, the horse-leech, of the King's Head Inn, found it in my pocket, and as there was no other headgear available I thought it better than nothing."

"How very strange!" said Angela. "How very curious! And do you expect me to believe that?"

The young man pursed his lips. "Tit-for-tat, madam. I have told you

what you think is a tall story and you have told me what I consider a horse-story."

Angela flushed. "Thank you, sir, and if you will please give me the halter." She snatched it out of his hand. "I wish to thank you for what you have done and to say that I consider this conversation has gone far enough."

The young man parried. "Not so fast, madam, please. One good turn deserves another. I am a stranger in London and I am searching for a certain Doctor King—the Reverend Doctor Arnold King." He produced a paper from his pocket and consulted it. "Doctor King is residing with the Earl of Primrose at Primrose House, Essex Street. Mr. Trent arranged that I should come to London on a produce cart bound for Covent Garden. He told me that Essex Street was close to the Garden, that anybody—even of the meanest intelligence—would direct me to its whereabouts."

Angela bridled. "Indeed, sir. Then perhaps you will ask somebody else more acquainted with the district. If you have come a long way I have travelled even a longer distance. I am but recently arrived from Scotland."

The young man laughed. "Oh, charming thought."

"What's that?" demanded Angela.

"I was thinking," he said, "of your journey from Scotland. Please tell me, who arrived first—you or your horse?"

Angela tugged her horse's head round. He came unwillingly but she hauled fiercely on the halter. She was extremely angry and she knew that the young man was laughing at her. She continued down the Strand towards Essex Street, but as she reached the Exeter Exchange she stole a surreptitious glance over her shoulder. The young man was standing in exactly the same position as when she had left him. He was looking thoughtfully after her and holding his ridiculous hat in his hand. She turned her face rigidly to the front again. "Come on with you!" she ordered, and gave the halter an angry tug. Champion, now completely crestfallen, did as he was bidden and plodded stolidly after her.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### FIRST TRICK IN THE GAME

BELOW-STAIRS at Primrose House was the centre of gossip, scandal, rumour and revelation. His lordship employed in all thirty-six indoor servants, counting personal maids, and these were made up of the under-butler, four footmen, Mrs. Annie Weelands—the ample, buxom and energetic cook, two under cooks, two linkmen, five kitchen- and scullery-maids, eight housemaids, four tweenies, one cellarman, one odd-job man, two sewing-maids, two laundry maids, and finally Boulter, Evans and Spence, who, save that they considered Mrs. Weelands their equal, were much higher on the domestic social scale, and a section apart.



Judged on the establishments of the day the *ménage* was not an unduly large one. Labour was cheap and domestic service was considered an honour in a peer's house. Both Lord and Lady Primrose had the name for being good employers. They did not whip their maids or flog the lackeys unnecessarily, and in a period when the rod ruled from stableyard to garret this was a decided advantage.

In many of the great households the innovation of the senior servants eating separately had been established, but Lady Primrose did not like innovations. The Primrose servants had always sat at a long table, with the 'salt butty' set in the centre to decide who were above and below the salt. So when breakfast was called in the kitchen the resplendent Boulter took his place at the head of the table with Mrs. Weelands on his right and Spence on his left, John Elliott, the assistant butler next to her and Evans placed next to Spence. After that the other servants took their places according to seniority and occupation, and the tweenie-maids and scullery-maids, having served them, went to their benches far below the 'butty'. For Primrose House, though in the midst of London, was run on the Scots feudal basis.

The breakfast consisted of cold beef, cut from a great baron, pickles, bread and butter, and to precede this course large plates of porridge. The whole meal was washed down with small beer, much the same as Queen Elizabeth had drunk two centuries before, for tea and coffee were still beverages of the *élite*.

Boulter sighed and pulled his amply filled platter of roast beef towards him. He helped himself liberally to salt, sparingly to pepper and pickles, and accepted a slice of bread from Mrs. Weelands. He was a large, plump man, with a round face and the demeanour of a bishop. He drained his mug of small beer and allowed Spence to fill it again. He took up his knife and deftly sliced his meat into more negotiable morsels. This was the signal, and upon it all those at the board began to cut and eat as they felt inclined.

Boulter swallowed and cleared his throat. "His lordship took plovers' eggs for his breakfast, Mrs. Weelands. He enjoyed them immensely and sent his compliments to you."

Mrs. Weelands beamed. "Thank you, Mr. Boulter. Real nice of his lordship to remember me, though there's not much in cooking a plover's egg to satisfaction." She speared an onion on the point of her knife and deftly carried it to her mouth. "And the reverend gentleman, did he have plovers' eggs an' all?"

"Doctor King, you mean? Why, yes, I believe he did." It was Boulter's practice to display only a casual interest in those outside the peerage.

Mrs. Weelands looked knowingly across to Spence. There was a certain jealousy between her ladyship's cook and tire-maid. "Looks as if something be in the air, as the saying goes, Miss Spence," she challenged; like all the Primrose servants, she was High Church, Tory and Jacobite, and into the bargain she had a brother sentenced to the Barbados plantations for bearing arms in the 'Forty-five.

Spence bridled, but Mrs. Weelands was not to be checked by a frown. "Just shows what them Whigs and Hanoverians are made out of. Setting on an old reverend gentleman like that, and trying to kill him."

Boulter was a trifle uncomfortable. He had told Mrs. Weelands the circumstances of Doctor King's adventure on his way to London, which he had culled by a little deft eavesdropping.

"If her ladyship had anything to say on the matter I certainly wouldn't repeat it," said Spence icily, her eyes upon the discomfited Boulter.

"Trouble you for the pickles," interrupted Evans, and saved a delicate situation. The meal continued, and for a while there was no discussion on dangerous topics, but everyone at table from the highest to the lowest knew of Doctor King's arrival on the previous night, and had heard some version of the reverend gentleman's expulsion from St. Mary's, Ightham, and the hold-up on the road.

"A man can't rebel after what was once his own," said Boulter, speaking his thoughts aloud.

Spence sniffed. She was dour and Northumbrian. "And the Whigs won't be surprised either when it does come, the way it's talked about," she snapped.

"Just like a romance it is," gushed Evans. "That young gentleman that Doctor King has befriended. And he being in the carriage, all unexpected, and beating the men that set upon them. And saving the doctor, and getting wounded into the bargain. It's like a story-book, really it is."

She saw Spence's frown and relapsed into resentful silence. Boulter threw caution to the winds.

"His name is Julian Brett, Evans," he declared informatively. "Mr. Julian Brett, and he isn't half what he ought to be, Evans, for he was sent down from Oxford, as the saying goes, for duelling and brawling."

"Mr. Julian Brett," repeated Evans. She almost caressed the name.

"And you need a good pinch of salt. Helps you to swallow it," said the dispassionate voice of John Elliott, the under-butler. He was discussing a homely recipe for air in the stomach with Mrs. Weelands.

Spence sniggered. "I expect we'll need more than a pinch of salt to swallow that tall tale and Mr. Brett into the bargain," she sniffed.

Elliott, who was the most self-effacing of men, found that the moody eyes of Mr. Boulter were upon him and lapsed into a nervous silence.

Mrs. Weelands sought for another topic. She fixed the unwilling Spence and began to argue furiously with her about the pros and cons of the reported intention of the Hanovers to enclose and confiscate Hyde Park from the use of all save those who were in the Court Circle. Though she contended that the Stuarts should have the 'divine rights of Kings' she did not extend this to the Hanovers. Moreover, Mrs. Weelands declared herself a militant Jacobite, and spoke vehemently of the agonies of slavery her beloved brother was suffering in the West Indian plantations, where the lot of the black slavers was vile enough, but that of the Jacobite rebels even viler.

A bell clanged to announce the three-quarters of an hour allowed for the servants' breakfast was ended. The staff of Primrose House rose and prepared to go about its varied tasks in the daily round. At a smaller side-table a tweenie-maid was setting places for the second breakfast; for the footman, chambermaid, tweenie-maid and kitchen-maid on duty.

Evans sighed and rose to her feet.

"Julian Brett—the name sort of sticks to you, doesn't it?"

Spence was thinking of another matter. "Where did the Lady Angela go this morning?" she questioned. "Early, Evans, I'm meaning. My lady required the eye-drops she told the Lady Angela to use. She sent me to fetch them from her bed-chamber."

Spence stopped speaking and eyed Evans with tight, disapproving lips. "Evans, you'll be getting yourself a whipping from her ladyship if you don't watch your young mistress better."

Evans flushed at the threat. "Indeed!" she exclaimed. "And if I do I'll have to thank you for it, Spence." She shrugged her shoulders. "If you must know, the Lady Angela rose early and went into the garden for to pick flowers," she declared.

Spence sniffed with obvious disbelief and prepared to depart upon her duties of toileting and preparing Lady Primrose for the exertions of the day.

"Do you think, Mr. Boulter, this Mr. Julian Brett will be one of the Yorkshire Bretts?" enquired Mrs. Weelands. "A fine Jacobite family they are."

Boulter shook his head. He had no further information to give upon the subject. Already, he felt, he had said too much.

. . . . .

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven,  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes;  
'Tis mightiest of the mightiest; it becomes  
The thronèd monarch better than his crown. . . ."

"Stop, Angela! Stop!" implored Bette Hilton.

Angela set down the copy of *The Merchant of Venice* and put out a very red tongue at her instructress.

"My dear," sighed Bette, "Mr. Garrick would be quite heartbroken if he heard the Immortal Bard spoken in this fashion. Angela, the court scene. . . . You are Portia. . . . You are disguised as an advocate, you appear before the Doge of Venice. . . . You plead for the life of a man. You use all the fire, power and persuasion that you know. . . ." She caught the expression on her pupil's face. "Angela, my dear, what in heaven's name is the matter?"

"I hate men! I wish the whole breed were going to have pounds of flesh hacked out of their chests and I wouldn't say one word to save them," declared Angela savagely.

"Exactly," agreed Bette Hilton. "Exactly; but that's impossible, so what else? My dear, we haven't done a stroke of work this whole morning." She looked roguishly at Angela. "What can the reason be? Has my Lord Cooper further offended his affianced wife?"

"Don't you dare to mention William's name."

Bette shrugged. "Surely it cannot be a young gentleman with a rather

curious headgear?" She smiled. Angela had poured out the happenings of the early morning the moment she had arrived, and now Bette found herself hard put to avoid bursting into laughter. Angela glared towards Bette, saw that the actress's face was a mirror of patient decorum and exploded.

"His name is Julian Brett, and he was insulting," she fumed. "I dislike him intensely, and I'm going to make him eat that stupid hat of his. But that isn't all. . . ."

"No?" cooed Bette.

"I had to pay that loathsome coster a guinea for his barrow, or he'd have followed me to the house. I'm going to ask Father to send Champion to the knacker's yard. The horrid beast!"

Bette arched her eyebrows. "Champion or the young man with the strange hat?"

"Both," snorted Angela. "And don't call him that absurd name. His name is Brett . . . Mr. Julian Brett." She tossed her head. "There's no mystery; dear Doctor King is so full of this *protégé* he must extol his virtues. He caught me on the staircase on my return from this escapade and I thought he'd never stop talking about the fellow. Of course he didn't see what a sight I looked; he couldn't! I could have sunk right through the floor! Evans says below-stairs they've been talking about nothing else. . . ."

"Julian Brett?" said Bette thoughtfully. "Sounds as if he might be good-looking."

"He is," cried Angela. "That's the trouble. How would you like an Adonis to ask you if you or your horse arrived first from Scotland?"

"Under the circumstances I wouldn't, my dear. And if he had I should have slapped his face."

Angela eyed Mrs. Hilton with annoyance. "How could I with Champion's halter in my hands?"

"Oh, my dear Angela. . . ." Bette burst into uncontrollable peals of laughter. "Angela, my dearest, what a situation! Will Shakespeare and the lesser poets have not dropped upon a plot as good as this. Listen, my love, you know who he is, but he is ignorant of your identity. You can play him like a trout upon a hook—and tenterhooks at that. When he comes here you can turn the laugh on him. If my lord employs him the game can go on—if he refuses him an engagement at least you're equal scores. Remember, Angela, man is always what he's born—and that's a man. A woman is a thousand characters poured into one human frame, and all the subterfuge of toilets to help her in successive roles."

Angela's eyes opened wide with excitement at the plan.

"Bette, you're an angel! A witch!" she exclaimed. She hurried to the schoolroom door. "Evans," she called. "Come quickly—at once. I want you."

. . . . .

Doctor King paced up and down the marble-tiled floor of the hall, his glance alternating between the gilt wall clock and Daullé's portrait of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. He felt a little disquieted in body and mind. The

former was occasioned by eating plovers' eggs—a dish of which he was inordinately fond, but which invariably produced tinges of indigestion. The latter feeling arose from the political discussion he had had with the Earl of Primrose whilst they breakfasted. The doctor had plumped for action. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle signed in 1748 between Britain and France, which had caused the ejection of Prince Charles from France, after a token imprisonment at Vincennes, was now virtually redundant, and the two countries were rapidly drifting into a state of war. King George, always ready to thwart France for the edification of his German commitments, was eager for the fray, and Mr. Pelham saw in hostilities an opportunity for the more open plundering of France's colonial and Eastern possessions.

This opening breach between Britain and France had changed Prince Charles's fortunes at the French Court. Already he was being secretly if not openly encouraged, and whilst it was the Hanoverian and British policy to play the octopus and stretch out tentacles and rive away France's colonies from her, the secret diplomacy, of which Louis, the Pompadour and Tercier were the joint controllers, paid for the Young Pretender's ten thousand muskets, encouraged his shadow court at Flushing.

All this had Doctor King explained to his lordship whilst they consumed weak China Caravan tea and strong plovers' eggs. He had implored a Jacobite move throughout England, and the contact of the adherents in Scotland and Ireland. He had whispered influential names from his secret list and told how these men awaited only the leadership and the word to rise.

However, Lord Primrose had preferred to remain uncomfortably settled on the horns of a dilemma. He had complained that since the demise of the late-lamented Sharpe he was without an agent, that he was out of touch with opinion—French, Scots and Irish—and until a trustworthy person was produced to fill this vacancy he felt that matters must remain dormant. Over the question of the appointment of a new agent he considered the position so dangerous that he felt loth to encourage further loss of flowering life in this capacity.

Doctor King leant upon his cane and smiled with satisfaction over one march he had stolen over the procrastinating Arthur. He had previously arranged that Julian Brett should call upon him at Primrose House at eleven of the clock, and he had been able to extract a promise from his host that he would interview the young man with an idea of his engagement in the vacant position.

Eleven o'clock was a well-chosen hour. By that time Mary Primrose would have completed her toilet and be at her husband's side. If Arthur's politics were lukewarm Mary's were a boiling torrent in the Stuart Cause. He felt reasonably sure that two birds would be killed with one stone: Julian would find the position he longed and his lordship's policy of agentless inactivity would be brought to an end.

Doctor King sighed. "*In magnis et voluisse sat est.*" His thoughts were interrupted by the lusty pealing of the front-door bell. Elliott, the under-butler, appeared in the lobby and pulled open the heavy door.

"A Mr. Julian Brett to see the Reverend Doctor King," announced Elliott, and Julian came briskly up the steps to be greeted by the doctor.

"My dear Julian, I wondered if anything had detained you. You are quite well again? Good. Tom Trent is a worker of miracles. Come along; Lord and Lady Primrose are in the library, and they know you are coming here."

They walked together arm in arm until they were out of Elliott's hearing, when the doctor gave a reassuring glance. "Most propitious! Capital!"

Julian looked towards the clock. "I'm not really late, sir. That time is a little in advance of the public clocks." His eyes fixed themselves on Prince Charlie's portrait and he gazed thoughtfully at it.

"Does this mean I have found a new master?" He stood fingering the corners of his dilapidated tricorne.

"I have hopes, Julian. Great hopes," assured Doctor King, and led the way from the hall into the corridor which led to the library. As they moved onwards there came the tinkle of girlish laughter from the floor above. The doctor glanced sideways at Julian, but found he was too engaged with his thoughts to take any notice of this diversion.

The interview in the library started well. Lord Primrose was in a pleasant frame of mind, and Julian hit on exactly the right mixture of deference and independence. His lordship was complimentary on Julian's show of pluck, and they discussed the attempt to waylay Doctor King at some length.

Lady Primrose, on the other hand, was strangely silent. She was content to study Julian from a woman's angle. His manners were natural and pleasant, and she admitted he was good-looking. His tall, well-built frame gave every indication of vigour and power. A good chin, eyes set wide apart and a fine forehead, she noted. The lips and mouth? Perhaps there was a sexual twist about them, but that viewed from the feminine angle was not entirely a disadvantage. Moreover, her middle-aged heart was flattered by the glances of obvious admiration which he surreptitiously bestowed upon her.

At last Mary felt her husband had indulged in generalities for long enough.

"My dear Arthur," she interrupted sweetly, "the reason for Mr. Brett's call is that he desires a situation suitable to his qualifications." She made a little expressive movement with her hands. "The White Rose of Stuart needs stout arms and nimble brains more than ever before. Mr. Brett is anxious to serve the Cause and has already done so. Why should we delay any longer? Surely the recommendations which Doctor King has given us are enough?"

"Why, yes, my dear," said Lord Primrose with considerable indecision. "When we pass from the passive to the active I feel sure Mr. Brett's services will suit us most admirably."

"The passive to the active?" exclaimed Mary Primrose. "Whatever next? Why, but for him by now we might all be lodged in the Tower! You know the importance of the papers which Arnold carried."

His lordship ceased fiddling with his quills and pounce-pot and cleared his throat nervously.

"Naturally in matters such as this we must proceed with the utmost caution, Mr. Brett."

"Certainly, my lord." Julian bowed.

"A young man of the type we need must be willing to sell his life dearly in the—eh—Cause. He must be willing to die rather than reveal the secrets entrusted to him."

Julian bowed again. "Doctor King has explained the conditions of the engagement very thoroughly. He may have mentioned something of the conversation which took place between Tom Trent, himself and myself, and how I pledged my loyalty to the King over the water?"

"Of course you did, Arnold," agreed Lady Primrose, her eyes upon the doctor. "We admire Mr. Brett for the choice he took."

Lord Primrose sighed. He wished fervently he had never undertaken the leadership of the English Jacobites. His thoughts turned to those wretched heads pickled and piked on Temple Bar. The poor remnants of the bluest blood in the land, and history had the unpleasant habit of repeating itself.

"I am awaiting your answer, my lord," said Julian deferentially.

"Of course," said Lord Primrose. "Of course."

"Once we have a trusted messenger communications with the Continent and elsewhere can be reopened," suggested Arnold King hopefully.

"And thank God all this shilly-shally will be at an end," snapped her ladyship.

Lord Primrose realized that further delay was impossible. He lifted his eye-piece and quizzed Julian.

"Mr. Brett."

"Sir."

"The position that you so ardently desire is open to you."

"Thank you, my lord," said Julian. He turned and bowed to Lady Primrose. "And thank you, my lady."

Lady Primrose preened herself and smiled back at him.

Julian turned his gaze to Doctor King. "And thank you, sir, from the bottom of my heart."

His lordship coughed in his most peremptory manner and demanded attention. "Mr. Brett, the terms of engagement are as follows: One hundred guineas per annum. You will bed and board in my household during such periods as you are in London. Your duties will necessitate considerable travelling, and during such periods expenses of transport, accommodation, and out-of-pockets will be met." He paused to survey Julian's clothing. The Igham suiting and greatcoat had already suffered considerably in the Stuart service. The rent which the pistol-ball had torn had met with only the most primitive preparation at the hands of Tom Trent. His lordship's eyes fixed themselves upon the tricorn hat which Julian held before him. He made it the target of noble censure.

"I should advise, young man, that Doctor King take you to the Cheapside, where the hatters are situated, and there you buy a headgear more suitable to your position."

"Why, readily," exclaimed Arnold King.

"For which my lord will be only too happy to pay." Lady Primrose ignored the wry look on her husband's face. "You'll need clothing, Mr. Brett, and I suggest that you and the doctor confer together. We will make a reasonable advance towards such expenditure."

"I will gladly see to the matter, Mary," agreed Doctor King with alacrity.

"I'm sure you will, Arnold. Mr. Brett, as the doctor is staying in the house perhaps you will care to take dinner with us?" She waved aside Julian's thanks. "We are Scots folk in the midst of the Sassenachs, but we maintain our national customs. Our table is open house and we dine at two o'clock each day. You will be acquainted whether we wish you to sup with us or not." She smiled and softened this arrogant display of class distinction. "Good-looking young men usually have their own ideas of spending their evenings."

"Thank you, madam." Julian's manner was charming and Lady Primrose took his bow as being as much for her as for her qualified invitation.

"Thank you, sir. You can be assured of my best endeavours to serve your lordship and the Cause."

Lord Primrose gave a gesture with his hand to intimate that the interview was at an end. He watched Doctor King and Julian Brett turn and leave the library. When the door had closed behind them he looked peevishly at his wife.

"Mary, why do you take matters into your hands? You're too impetuous, my dear. In matters such as these we must use decorum. Why do you always purposely misunderstand me, Mary?"

Lady Primrose laughed lightly. She knew Arthur wished to provoke her, for she had forced his hand regardless of his intentions to procrastinate over the appointment of the unfortunate Sharpe.

"You're making mountains out of molehills," she said impatiently. "I take Arnold's word for it. Brett has been a victim of circumstances—no more."

Lord Primrose eyed her sullenly. "Your blood be upon your own head, Mary. Personally, I would prefer a more strenuous enquiry before admitting this person to our household. You forget that Angela is of a young and impressionable age and Brett has undoubted good looks and a way with him."

"Angela!" exclaimed Mary. "Heavens, what next! We've given her Cooper to cope with; surely he's enough for any *débutante*? Really, Arthur, you insult my intelligence and your own!" She laughed gaily, and with an arrogant rustle of silks moved elegantly to the door.

## CHAPTER NINE

### REJOICING IN THE NAME OF JEM PRINGLE

JULIAN was so delighted with his success that he felt he was treading on air. The humdrum subservience of his situation with Jasper Broad and the amorous importunities of Polly had driven him near to insanity. Now the



whole prospect was changed. This stroke of good luck had come unexpectedly his way, and he was youthfully certain that Dame Fortune must continue to beam upon him.

Was he not now a gentleman by status and occupation? A member of a nobleman's household? Did he not enjoy a limited acceptance into the family circle of so great a personage as the Earl of Primrose? Had not so great a lady as the Countess of Primrose smiled upon him? England—Scotland—Ireland—and the Colonies beyond the seas desired a new king, but the whole of the Stuart Cause had been so hopelessly mismanaged, and calamity had succeeded calamity. This was the opportunity of a lifetime and he, Julian Brett, gentleman, would change the entire prospects of the exiled House. Besides—and more personally—was there ever so much money in the world as one hundred guineas and all found? In harmony with his exciting thoughts his pace increased. He felt as if he was shod in the 'Seven League Boots' of enterprise and success.

"Steady, Julian! Steady!" protested Doctor King breathlessly. "You'll walk the very heart out of me."

They had reached the corner of Essex Street and the Strand, and Julian paused to allow the clergyman to come up with him.

"The excitement of the moment! Your successful application!" The doctor dabbed his forehead with a large white silk handkerchief. "But, Julian, please allow me to live to see the fruition of this achievement for which we have longed. If we keep up this pace I assure you I shall die of heart attack."

"Your heart, Doctor. How thoughtless of me!" As Julian spoke his eyes lighted upon a cabbage, a turnip and two carrots which lay forlorn and damaged in the gutter. The doctor's heart and these vegetables combined to bring a memory back to him. He smiled at the outline of St. Clement Danes, which was bathed in Spring sunlight. He toed the turnip, inviting further memory of a pleasant episode.

"Hearts are strange things, sir. They control so much of us." He smiled at the perplexed expression on the doctor's face. "She was so very pretty and so disconcerted. You see, sir, her horse had run away from her. A fine but wilful creature. The horse, I mean. . . . Though she was a high-stepping filly if ever there was one."

Doctor King, whose breath was coming back, heartily disapproved of this line of conversation, but before he could protest Julian was continuing his reminiscence.

"The horse had upset a coster's barrow, but that was before I happened on the scene. Anyway, I was able to stop the animal and return him to his mistress. She was not very grateful; women seldom are when taken at a disadvantage. However, I gained one slight advantage." He thrust his hand into his trouser pocket and took out a golden guinea and spun it thoughtfully in the air. "The coster was rude and abusive and extracted a guinea from this damsel in distress, but as I had been instrumental in stopping the runaway, I felt I had a greater claim to the reward, sir. The fellow was inclined to be a little talkative, so I showed him the folly of his ways and relieved him of his ill-gotten gains."

"This is preposterous!" protested Doctor King. "Do you mean to say you forced this man to give up his money? The money paid for the damage to his wares?"

Julian returned the coin to his pocket.

"Why not, sir?" he demanded innocently. "Surely it was poetic justice?"

He kicked the turnip lustily along the gutter.

"Julian," fumed the doctor, "are you telling me that within half an hour of your arrival in London you are embroiled in an escapade with some female? I do warn you against such foolery. Keep away from the toils of women, and remember where their machinations have already landed you. You have the misfortune of attracting the opposite sex, and I implore you to keep this fatal attraction of yours in check. Lord Primrose will not tolerate peccadilloes for one instant. Only on my assurance that you were completely reformed did he consider your engagement."

The doctor's righteous indignation left him as breathless as he had been before. Julian slipped a conciliatory hand through his arm and changed the subject.

"Come, sir, or we shall be late. His lordship dines at two o'clock and we have a great deal to do before that hour arrives."

They turned into the Strand and made their way towards the City. The doctor, whilst still resentful, was rapidly calming, and though he was too preoccupied to remark upon the exhibits of the hapless Jacobites upon Temple Bar, by the time they had reached Fleet Street he was full of information.

The Press—the newspapers—the broadsheets—the pamphlets—and the men who wrote them. First had come the spoken and then the written word. The doctor considered that soon the written word would take precedent. A Doctor Samuel Johnson had started the preparation of a Lexicon, and he considered this co-ordination of the English language was the first step towards the education of the masses. One day, every man and woman in Britain would be able to read and write, and letters would no longer be the patent of the privileged few. He grew serious. These Hanoverians were playing a clever game. They paid pensions to the best of the writers and authors in the land and thus made sure these fellows would write in their favour. He feared that unless something was done the coming generation would look upon the House of Stuart as ogres and oppressors. In the past the divine right of kings and the freedom of the Press had been awkward bedfellows, but when King James returned to the throne some formula for liberty of opinion must be installed. In fact, said the doctor, he hoped he would be instrumental in so doing.

They reached the foot of Ludgate Hill and the gloomy passage of the Lud Gate lay ahead of them. The roadway through the gate was incredibly narrow and here a host of carters, waggoners, porters and pedestrians jostled and cursed one another to make way. The language was lurid, and the hooves of the horses and the wheels of the conveyances were no respecters of persons, life or property. Whilst to make matters worse the gateman, whose work it was to see that carts did not meet in the centre of the gate, where passing was impossible, was gloriously drunk and quite incapable of his duties.

When Doctor King and Julian Brett arrived the worst had occurred and

the passageway was entirely blocked by two large waggons whose drivers furiously refused to give way in favour of each other. The two pairs of horses stood nose to nose with every show of docility, whilst the two oafish carters cursed, swore and threatened violence to each other with their long-lashed whips. Other drivers wishing to pass through the gate took sides according to their direction, the pedestrians and loafers shouted their views, encouraging violence, and the children and dogs added their quota to the bedlam. Chaos was let loose, and the watchman, quite unable to cope with the situation, returned to his gin bottle, roaring between gulps: "The King, God bless him!"

Julian laughed. "I see King George has at least one adherent."

Doctor King demurred. "How, Julian? The fellow does not define which king." The doctor was for avoiding the press and going by a more circuitous route, but Julian would have none of the suggestion. Such riff-raff as this should not keep him from his lawful occasions, and telling the doctor to follow him he thrust his way through the press.

"The King, God bless him!" chanted the gateman, waving his gin bottle. "And a health to you, reverend sir, and to you, young gentleman," he added with alcoholic enthusiasm.

Doctor King doffed his hat politely to the toast, and the people, seeing that a clergyman was amidst them, became a little more decorous in their behaviour. Even the carters looked a little shamefaced and put up their whips, suggesting the reverend gentleman might make an arbitration between them.

"Readily," agreed Doctor King, and held up his hand for silence. "Let us think of the points of the compass and how we box it. North, east, south and west. Why, east comes before west, that is the principle we all observe, for the passage of the sun has so instructed us. Let east take precedence over west in the matters of these carters and their rights of way." He turned to the waggoners. "Mr. West, to you I say go back. And to you, Mr. East, I say come on."

The crowd cheered Doctor King's judgment and there were cries of "God bless you, sir," and "A Solomon in our midst." Whilst the waggoners forgot their altercation to salute him, and for the West to draw back with much clicking and clucking to his horses and the East to whip up and drive on.

"God save the King," shouted the drunken gateman, giving a swordlike salute with the gin bottle.

The doctor did not lose an opportunity. "Well said, fellow. You are cleverer than I credited. You know my name is King, and you drink my health and give me your blessing."

The crowd caught the sarcasm of the quip and roared with laughter. They waved their hands and cheered as the doctor and Julian passed through the gateway and started up Ludgate Hill.

The vista of Wren's St. Paul's Cathedral was spread before them and the great church made an impressive sight, bathed in the moonday sun. Doctor King became thoughtful and talked of the great men that the Stuarts had been

able to collect about them, and who had worked and served for the betterment of the community. His shining example was Christopher Wren, and he contended that without the direct patronage of King Charles II the great architect would have gone unnoticed. He spoke, too, of Sir Isaac Newton, of Pepys and Inigo Jones.

His expression became serious. "Yes, Julian, the Hanovers and their hired scribes are building up a false description of our Stuart kings. James I is a witchfinder, Charles II is a whoremonger and James II is a king who'd put a Mass before his crown."

Julian looked thoughtfully at the doctor. "But surely our Cause is at a disadvantage if the people believe these stories?"

"No, Julian, they do not believe them. Once they almost did, but then Prince Charles Edward Stuart came to fight his father's Cause in the Rising of the Forty-five. He was beaten by the Hanovers and Cumberland indulged himself in a Teutonic orgy of blood and persecution. With a price of £30,000 on his head Prince Charles wandered the Highlands with the whole fury of the Hanoverian bloodhounds at his heels. He lived amidst these persecuted clansmen, he shared whatever they could give him. Sometimes he had a roof over his head, sometimes like a wild beast he made a cave his home. For four whole months he was a fugitive and yet no man nor woman betrayed him. He became a legend, he was Bonnie Prince Charlie. When the last shot echoed over Culloden Moor on the 16th of April, 1746, the world thought the Stuart Cause was dead, but from that moment Bonnie Prince Charlie began his conquests. He did not win crowns or territories but he conquered the imagination of the hearts of men and women."

"The conquest in defeat?" said Julian slowly. "I had never thought of Bonnie Prince Charlie that way."

They walked on. Doctor King was full of his own thoughts, whilst Julian found fresh interest here, there and everywhere. Oxford was the only city of any size he had previously experienced, but between it and London there was no comparison. The vastness of this London, the thronging streets, the shops, the ale-houses, the costers, street-hawkers and flower-girls, all made a constantly changing picture. He found himself repeatedly asking questions. Was that person a city merchant? Surely this magnificent gentleman could be none less than the Lord Mayor? Was this group of youths the unruly apprentices he had heard so much about? He marvelled to hear German, Dutch, French and so many alien tongues spoken openly in the streets. They turned into Cheapside and neared their destination.

"If a man could hold London for a week the whole of Britain would be his," said Julian pensively. "Do you remember Oliver Cromwell, sir? He held London, and that was the keynote of his strategy."

The doctor frowned. Any mention of Cromwell was anathema. Julian's exuberance of spirit knew no check and the answering of these endless questions combined with the rough going over the uneven cobbles had tired him inordinately.

"Please do not mention that fellow Cromwell in my presence, Julian," he snorted. "His body lies beneath the gibbet at Tyburn, and that is a fitting end for him."

"But, sir," protested Julian, "even though Noll was everything evil, surely we can admire his strategy and perhaps adopt some of it to our own purposes. I still maintain that he who commands London for a week has Britain in his hands."

The doctor was adamant. "I do not wish to discuss the question," he declared, and changed the subject. "Here is Mr. Selby, the tailor, and an old friend of mine. Nobody in the City could supply you better."

They entered the somewhat dingy shop, and Mr. Launcelot Selby, who was a very small man with a very large wig, came forward rubbing his hands with excitement and anticipation at seeing the doctor. Julian's needs were explained and the tailor declared with alacrity he could supply them.

Moreover, as there was some urgency, whilst two of the three suits could be made to measure, and an evening suit ordered and left for later delivery, Mr. Selby had just the confection at hand for immediate delivery. He had built a suit for a young gentleman who was in every way Julian's size and shape. The tailor whispered confidentially his customer had not paid his account, and for that matter he was at the moment being crimped for debt. The tradesman considered he was within his rights to sell the suit. Would Mr. Brett step into the back part of the shop and try it on? Good. Yes, there was also a box-cloth overcoat, cut in the very latest style, which went with it. He would make a nice price for the lot.

Julian stepped into the back part and stripped off. The garments of the crimped young gentleman were produced and duly tried on. They proved an excellent fit and might have been specially tailored. The only fault was a rucking at the collar, which could easily be dealt with, and the suit would be ready for wearing within an hour.

"Capital, capital," agreed Doctor King. He thought the line of the breeches excellent, the waistcoat in the newest style, and the brown and fawn sufficiently subdued for Julian's occupation. The overcoat, of a deeper fawn, was just the thing, and the whole outfit was of Mr. Selby's celebrated London cut, a fact which the tailor explained a dozen times.

"Within an hour," chirped Mr. Selby. "This suit shall be on your back, sir, within an hour." He called sharply, and from the cutting and finishing room there appeared two lugubrious-looking individuals who would do the adjustments. These he quickly despatched with their instructions.

Mr. Selby replaced his tape-measure about his shoulders, where it hung incongruously across the bottom of his wig, and they returned to the counter. Here, bale after bale of cloth was taken down and run out for inspection. However, in the matter of material and pattern Doctor King was very firm. He insisted on fabrics that would bear hard wear and on subdued patterns becoming the agent of a nobleman, though Julian would have preferred stuffs more fitting for a nobleman.

At last grey and pepper-and-salt suitings were selected, and for the evening suit breeches of black satin with silver buckles, a full coat of the same material and a pair of flowered waistcoats were chosen. Mr. Selby's shirt department would undertake to supply a laced stock and ruffles.

"Shirts, top-boots, pumps, gloves, stocks, waistcoats." Mr. Selby ran his eye down the list. He felt as a City tradesman he was best fitted to deal

with business and to obtain the keenest prices. Mister Heyward, the shirt-maker, was his excellent friend and would be happy for the order. Mr. Short was unequalled as a bootmaker and would allow a handsome discount. He would send immediately for these tradesmen and have them come to his shop. Now came the question of hats. Mr. Selby thought Julian had best step across the Cheapside to Mr. Douglas Townend, the hatter, and give his name. Mr. Townend had by far the best selection and styles in the whole of the City. Moreover, on one point Mr. Selby was quite emphatic. Doctor King was his valued customer and friend, and in dealing with other tradesmen they were to mention his name and have all articles charged to his account. "For," he explained knowingly, "they must allow me a percentage, for such is the custom, and that discount shall be yours, my dear sirs."

As Mr. Selby suggested, they went across to Mr. Townend's shop and here discovered a very large person, assisted by an extremely small boy, who was literally surrounded by gentlemen's headgear of all vogue, fashions, materials and descriptions. Whilst at the other end of the shop stood rows of wig-stands upon which the art of wig-making, blocking and setting was diligently being carried out.

Mr. Townend beamed largely upon them. He accepted Mr. Selby's introduction without demur, and added that he had once had the honour of hearing the Reverend Doctor King preach at St. Saviour's and had been much impressed by his discourse—a carefully placed compliment which put the doctor in the highest of good humours.

"Let me see the hat you are wearing, sir," he requested. Julian, with some misgiving, handed Mr. Townend the tricorne. All the way from the Strand to Cheapside he had carried the hat in his hand, hoping thereby to attract less attention.

"It's not a very good fit," he explained lamely.

"Quite, sir, quite," agreed Mr. Townend, and advancing with a tape-measure encircled Julian's head. "Six and seven-eighths," he called. "Six and seven-eighths, Tommy my boy. What can we do for this young gentleman with a head of size six and seven-eighths?"

The small boy leapt into action. He hurried away, mounted a step-ladder and very dexterously lifted an enormous pile of white buckram hat-boxes from a shelf. Carefully balancing these in a mighty pyramid, he descended the ladder and, with the mincing steps of a juggler, arrived at the counter. Here he stopped and waited for Mr. Townend to unload him.

"All the latest styles and fashions," piped the small boy. "All the latest styles and fashions and of a hard-wearing quality, too, my dear sirs."

Mr. Townend beamed. "Good boy. Good boy, Tommy. There isn't another boy like you in the length and breadth of the Cheapside, that I'll wager."

As there were no offers to take up Mr. Townend's wager, he returned to the business of selling hats.

"Now, sir," he said to Julian. "Please to face the mirror and tell me your pleasure or otherwise." He turned to Doctor King: "And you, reverend sir, will doubtless offer sage advice."

During the next few minutes Julian had at least fifty hats placed upon

his head, and this was after Mr. Townend had discovered that he did not intend to wear powder or wig, which somewhat limited the scope.

Mr. Townend's procedure was to take a hat from Tommy's hands, place it deftly on Julian's head, go into transports of admiration and, stopping suddenly, await the verdicts of the doctor and Julian. If these were not favourable the hat would be whipped off and another substituted, whereupon the exclamations of admiration would be repeated. If prospects were flagging Tommy would add his piping transports to those of Mr. Townend.

At last the selection was made. Julian was to have two new hats. For formal occasions a black felt tricorn, blocked in the newest fashion, with crisp curling brims and a narrow piping of gold lace. For other occasions a half-crown, with three-sided curling brims, but less rigid than the tricorn, and made of a beaver-felt, with brown silk band and tie, which blended pleasantly with the fawn of the hat. Doctor King was in some doubt about this particular confection, for it was very new and stylish, and he wondered if such a revolutionary headgear would please Lord Primrose. But Julian was adamant. He had a new greatcoat which would be of these exact shades; his duties would mean much horse-riding, and he must look a credit to the Cause.

"Quiet, Julian! Quiet!" implored Doctor King, for he caught an exchange of glances between Mr. Townend and Tommy.

"The gentleman will be travelling to foreign parts?" suggested Mr. Townend, with an eye to information and commerce, and taking up and stroking the beaver half-crown. He cleared his throat as a prelude to salesmanship. "The half-crown, as it is termed, is the French style; rather should I say the Continental fashion. Once over the Channel the wearer of such a hat would be less conspicuous. In fact, should there be any delicate negotiation to be done by the young gentleman in another land, I could not conceive a more suitable head-covering."

"We will take the hat," boomed Doctor King. "The decision is made and we'll waste no more time on suppositions. Julian, carry it with you. Since your heart is set upon it you had best wear it with your new outfit."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Townend with subdued tones. "Thank you, gentlemen. The account shall be despatched to Mr. Selby."

"Thank you, gentlemen," chirped Tommy in a youthful imitation of his master. "The account goes to Mr. Selby."

"Good day to you," said Doctor King with considerable firmness.

They left the shop of Mr. Townend and walked leisurely along Cheapside. The doctor consulted his watch and saw there was some little time before they must be back at Mr. Selby's establishment, and he considered this would be best employed in taking the air and showing Julian a few of the City's interests as were in easy distance.

There was, for instance, the Mansion House, the Bank of England—which, remarked Doctor King, had taken a Scot to found it—and the Royal Exchange, which had been established during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. They moved on to examine from its exterior the Guildhall, which was still somewhat dilapidated and patchworked as the result of the Great Fire. One day, the doctor hoped, the City Fathers would take in hand this priceless relic of their

institution and effect a proper reconstruction, for its foundation dated back to the year 1411 and its Library to 1423.

"Perhaps we must wait the return of the Stuarts for that?" asked Julian, hoping to please with his suggestion, but the result was entirely opposite.

"Julian," said Doctor King, "I must implore you to be more careful. I know you mean everything for the best, but walls have ears, and this City of London is a hunting-ground for the Hanoverian spies and Whig partizans. What you may say in fun can be taken seriously. Those who hear what you say may recognize me and know of my Stuart sympathies. Therefore a word said at random, a quip or a jest could bring great distress to the Cause."

"I'm sorry, Doctor," said Julian earnestly. "I was so happy and excited with all that has happened I forget what lies ahead."

The doctor put his hand upon Julian's arm. "Yes, what lies ahead? Julian, you came into this of your own free will, I did not ask you nor persuade you?"

Julian shook his head. "I came with both eyes open and with both fists clenched," he agreed quietly. "But let's change the subject, sir. Tell and show me more of the City of London."

Time slipped easily by, and at last when Doctor King took out his watch he realized they were well past the appointed time to be back at Mr. Selby's shop.

In fact, when they approached they saw that Mr. Selby was standing at his door and peering up and down the Cheapside. He at once greeted them as if they had been long-lost friends. The young gentleman's outfit was ready and waiting. Would they step inside? The alterations had been more simple than he had thought.

Julian was conducted into the after-part of the shop, and here he found that besides the new suit a pair of half-boots with yellow and black toppings and a new shirt and stock had been laid out, and all were of an excellent match. Whilst Doctor King and Mr. Selby continued their small-talk he changed rapidly and was helped into his new garments by the attentive cutter.

"An excellent fit. The latest style," cried Mr. Selby in professional ecstasy. He went hurrying away and came back with a light riding crop with an ornamental horn handle. "To complete the picture, my dear young sir. A present from the House of Selby," he enthused as he made the presentation.

Whilst Julian admired himself in the long mirror, Doctor King kept nodding his head and smiling with pleasure. The account, he insisted, not only for this outfit but also for the suits to be built, must be sent to him. He waved aside Julian's thanks. Later something might be repaid, but he had money enough in his account at Coutts' Bank, and was only too pleased to find such an excellent use for it.

Mr. Selby clapped his hands and from the recess of the shop there appeared a trim young serving-maid, who bore a tray on which was a decanter of Spanish sack, gingerbread and biscuits. She placed the refreshments on a small gate-legged table and stood ready to wait upon the gentlemen, but rather to Julian's regret Mr. Selby waved her away,



"Thank you, Betty. We can attend to ourselves." She gave a bob-curtsey and was off with a toss of her head—and a roguish look towards Julian. Mr. Selby poured out the sack. "Help yourselves, gentlemen." He raised his glass and toasted. "Good wine and pretty women were ever bad bedfellows." Then, realizing Doctor King's calling, apologized quickly. "Saving your cloth, sir."

The doctor smiled indulgently, sipped his wine and smacked his lips. "Excellent, Mr. Selby, most excellent."

Mr. Selby winked. "And not a penny piece of duty paid. No, sir, King George will be none the richer for this. Not one farthing. A gingerbread, sir?" he invited Julian. "The biscuits are most excellent, made with Betty's own fair hands." He winked towards the doctor, showing that Julian's admiration for the trim wench had not passed unnoticed.

There came a sudden knocking on the counter, and they turned to see the diminutive Tommy from Mr. Townend's hat shop. He was enquiring earnestly of the cutter and held a tricorne hat in his hand.

"Mr. Jem Pringle, that's who I want. He's left his old hat in my master's store. Mr. Jem Pringle."

"Pringle? Jem Pringle? We know nobody of that name," said the cutter thoughtfully.

Tommy turned his head, peered into the after-part of the shop and saw Julian. "But he's there. Look, sitting down and drinking wine. That's Mr. Pringle. . . . And here's his hat."

The boy came running forward and without any more ceremony pushed the tricorne on to Julian's lap. "Here's your hat, Mr. Pringle. Not much to look at, but Mr. Townend thought you might want it all the same. Didn't know whose it was, not until we turned back the head-band, and there it's written large as life. . . . Mr. JEM PRINGLE. At your service, gentlemen."

Tommy turned about, and without waiting for thanks or a possible tip went scurrying away.

Doctor King finished his sack and rose to his feet. Mr. Selby was obviously interested, but to give any explanation would be unnecessarily dangerous. So they left the shopkeeper's curiosity unsatisfied and moved towards the door.

A moment later they quitted the shop, accepting the effusive thanks of Mr. Selby, and started briskly down Cheapside, heading westwards to St. Paul's Churchyard. Already it was near on to one o'clock, and Doctor King stressed that they must hurry or else they would arrive late at Primrose House.

"I wonder who this fellow Pringle can be?" asked Julian, as they started down Ludgate Hill.

Doctor King shook his head. "How can we know? Julian, a name written in the lining of a hat is proof of nothing. Think of the circumstances; it may have been stolen a dozen times."

Julian shrugged his shoulders.

"There is something in that name, sir."

Doctor King chuckled. "How can a materialist chase so many shadows?

You must be more consistent, Julian, or I'll think you a romanticist, and that would never do."

Boulter inspected the dining-table with some personal satisfaction. The linen had the whiteness of driven snow. There was the twinkle of burnished silver and the glitter of perfectly polished glass. Flowers decorated in great profusion, set out in large open bowls, for Lady Primrose favoured this French fashion.

The major-domo stood thoughtful and counted the places laid. His lordship and her ladyship and the Lady Angela. Lord Cooper with Sir Guy Stanley were expected. The Reverend Doctor King and that young gentleman Mr. Julian Brett. He looked across at Elliott. "Mr. Julian Brett," he said speculatively. "So his lordship's found a new agent."

Elliott smirked. "I wonder how long he's going to last, Mr. Boulter? He's a bit on the arrogant side for an agent, to my way of thinking, but he'll be snuffed out like a candle, much the same as the others, I'm thinking!"

Boulter ignored the remarks. He looked enquiringly at an extra place set at the table.

"And who's to sit there?" he asked.

"Mrs. Bette Hilton," said Elliott.

Boulter blew his cheeks. "What, the play actress? Did her ladyship send instructions that she was to be laid for?"

"The Lady Angela did," said Elliott. "She sent Evans down about half an hour ago."

Boulter's loyalty was such that he could not criticize a member of the family, but all the same his face betrayed that he thought things had come to a pretty pass.

"Mr. Garrick is being received everywhere," said Elliott, "and if they are taking actors in I don't see why they should draw the line at the actresses."

"Playing with fire," said Boulter morosely. "That's what it is—playing with fire. Sir Guy Stanley will be hopping off to Gretna Green with Mrs. Hilton, and there'll be a fine scandal when that happens."

Further discussion was interrupted by the door being opened to admit the four footmen who would serve at table. They stood in a line, resplendent in their liveries. Boulter inspected them, twitching a button here and a piece of lace there.

"All right," he said. "You know what you've to do, and do it quickly, and none of that clattering of plates. There'll be broiled fish in parsley sauce, and a roast sirloin of beef—or capons for such as like them. And for afters there's a trifle and jam puffs and pastries. A fine Wensleydale cheese and Spring lettuce." He sighed. These menus, to his way of thinking, were trivial, and in fact, Lady Primrose kept only a little table compared with the gigantic feasts spread out on all occasions by other members of the nobility.

Elliott crossed to the sideboard and, assisted by a footman, saw to the wine. The claret was all safe in its coolers. There was sack for such as liked it and good French brandy to round off the meal. Also, there would be

coffee—that again was an innovation which Lady Primrose had brought back with her from the Continent.

"Everything ready?" said Boulter.

"Yes, sir," said Elliott.

"Very good." Boulter turned and walked pompously to the doorway.

On this movement a pair of footmen crossed to the double doors and threw them open to allow him to pass. Boulter continued down the corridor, glancing morosely at the rows of portraits of the Primrose ancestors which decorated the walls. He reached the hall, pulled the lapels of his coat and advanced to the Blue drawing-room.

"My lady," he announced. "Dinner is served."

Lady Primrose, Lord Primrose, Lord Cooper and Sir Guy Stanley were enjoying small-talk. At least, they were talking trivialities and pretending to relish them.

"Thank you, Boulter."

Lady Primrose turned to her husband. "Arthur, I think we had better go in. William says he has an engagement at the Cabinet Offices and very little time to spare. It is such a pity that Angela cannot be down on time."

"Perhaps," suggested Lord Cooper, "she is preparing a special toilet for the occasion. I like to flatter myself that she is."

Sir Guy smiled. "My dear William, you are becoming almost the perfect lover," he congratulated. "But I wonder whether it is folly or not to think that a woman dresses herself for the edification of any man. I always believe she does it as a form of rivalry against other women." He took snuff elegantly. "What do you say?"

William declined the proffered snuff-box. He was beginning to find Guy Stanley more than a little tiresome. The young man was displaying a lightness which was hardly in keeping with Cooper's position of Solicitor-General. He must speak to him about it.

From the hall outside there came the sound of high heels tapping upon the marble tiling. The next moment Angela, dressed in the very height of fashion, a veritable *poupée*, appeared through the doorway.

"My dear Angela," protested Lord Primrose. "What a toilet for the daytime! My dear, you go too far!"

Angela smiled ravishingly. "Papa, I felt such a tramp, and I thought that William would like to see another of those perfect confections about which he is always lecturing me."

Lady Primrose's eyes had travelled past her daughter. She was regarding Bette Hilton, who was also in the height of fashion, but rather more flamboyant in her style.

"Mrs. Hilton," she greeted with some surprise. "I did not think that you would remain so late. It is so kind of you to give your valuable time to Angela. I hope she is an apt pupil."

"Apt pupil, fiddlesticks, Mama!" interrupted Angela. "Bette's coming to dinner with us—I asked her myself. In fact, I took the words out of your mouth, didn't I, darling?"

"Oh, I see," said Lady Primrose coolly.

Guy Stanley felt that the moment had arrived for him to gush. "Bette my dear, what an unexpected pleasure, and how charming of Aunt Mary to think of it. My dear, I was devastated, and now the sunlight once again is streaming into my life."

Mrs. Hilton regarded him with pursed lips. "Really, Guy, I was beginning to wonder whether I was not a little devastated myself. I hope, Lady Primrose, you do not look upon this as an intrusion?"

The two women eyed each other coolly. "My dear Mrs. Hilton, when I think of you I hardly know what the word 'intrusion' means," said her ladyship with accentuated sweetness.

"Too bad of King to be so late. And that young fellow Brett, he must learn about punctuality."

"Mr. Brett?" enquired Angela naively. "And who, may I ask, is Brett?"

"Your father's new agent," said Lady Primrose silkily. "He is a protégé of Doctor King and he has persuaded us to give him a trial. He was at Oxford and I believe intended for the Church."

Lord Cooper looked up from the examination of his filbert nails. "I wonder which occupation is nearer the next world—to be a clergyman or my Lord Primrose's agent?"

"Tut—tut—tut!" remonstrated Angela. "That sounds more like Mr. Pelham than you, William."

Boulter was still standing at the door. His face was a complete mask, and he gave not the slightest indication he had heard a single word of the conversation.

The outside bell rang distantly and the major-domo came out of his detachment. He listened intently, and then moving across to where Lord Primrose stood he whispered deferentially in his ear:

"Doctor King and Mr. Julian Brett are arrived, my lord."

Arthur Primrose glanced across at his wife, caught her eye and nodded his head.

"At long last we can go in to dinner!" sighed Mary Primrose. She took Lord Cooper's arm and led the way.

Julian and Doctor King, who were being divested of their coats in the hall, saw the party pass. Lady Primrose smiled towards them in a frigid, distant sort of way.

"A bad start, my boy," said the doctor. "But don't worry, I'll take the blame. Come along, we mustn't keep them waiting another instant."

They followed into the dining-room, and here the hostess was putting her guests into their places. Lord Cooper was to sit on her left, and Doctor King to have the place of honour on her right; Bette Hilton was deputed the right of Lord Primrose, but this only after a moment's cogitation. Lady Primrose was clever in her snubs; she wanted the Hilton woman to realize that she was only given the place of honour on sufferance.

Angela sat on her father's left and Guy Stanley next to her. Julian waited, still without a place, and a nod from Lord Primrose indicated that he was to sit between Lord Cooper and Mrs. Hilton.

The meal started. Lord Cooper affably dominated the conversation. He

talked across the table to Angela, complimented Lord Primrose upon his sack and declared the turbot was the best cooked he had ever eaten.

Bette Hilton, for her part, was completely brazen. Another woman might have quailed at so scant a reception, but Bette was nothing if not a play actress. She gushed importantly about her next role at the 'Lane'. David Garrick wished her to play Goneril in his new production of William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. She sighed. She thought the role was somewhat unsympathetic, she wanted something a little warmer, a role that would suit her better.

Lady Primrose cut in: "Didn't Will Shakespeare say 'All the world's a stage', or something? Mrs. Hilton, you must find acting a most fascinating pursuit."

Bette Hilton's lips tightened for an instant, but the next she was smiling again.

"Why, yes, Lady Primrose," she conceded. "How strange you should say that! You have spoken almost word for word as did Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales only yesterday."

Lady Primrose was silent. She would dearly have liked to have said something very cutting about the Hanovers, but she dare not do this. William Cooper was there watching eagerly for the retort. It were better to disappoint him than to snub Hilton.

Doctor King saved the situation by throwing out a string of platitudes. He wondered which lived longest in the minds of men—great feats of strength and arms or the magnificent works of the pen and brush. This gave Bette Hilton another opportunity. She went into a fulsome description of the sittings she was giving to her Hogarth. The work was coming along most excellently, but she wished that the days would grow a little warmer, it was so extremely cold sitting for hours in one's bare skin.

The thought of Mrs. Hilton's bare skin so affected Sir Guy Stanley that he entirely missed his mouth with a large forkful of fish, and hastily and blushing repaired the damage with his napkin.

Up to now Julian had been completely silent. Lady Primrose, though a good hostess, and well practised in the art of making people feel at ease, had for once forgotten her obligations. Perhaps this oversight was because of the delay before dinner could be served, or again Bette Hilton's unexpected presence at the table. The fact remained, she had not introduced Julian to anybody, and therefore save for his lordship and herself and Doctor King he knew no one at the table. However, he gathered who these people might be. Lord Cooper was easily recognizable, and every moment Julian liked him less. Mrs. Hilton was only too keen to tell all and sundry of her prowess as a play actress, whilst the youthful Stanley was so obviously her adorer. Doctor King had already given some description of the baronet and his vast possessions.

This left the Lady Angela Primrose. He looked across the table at this perfectly toileted young lady of fashion. He saw what he expected to see—beauty, breeding, arrogance and artificiality. He felt that a large part of her day must be spent in the hands of her tire-maids. He wondered if in her little head, so ornamented and surrounded with cascades of curls, there was

a single thought other than self-adornment. And yet, vaguely, looking at her ravishing person he found something strangely familiar. He kept wondering repeatedly where he had seen another girl something like this. He tried to take away the powder, the paint, the patches, the wasp waist, the enhanced bosom and the cascades of flouncing silks and laces.

Obviously the girl was in the first flush of her youth—she was engaged to be married to the Earl of Cooper, who, he presumed, was a great nobleman, and therefore the match would be a successful one. It seemed a little difficult to understand why the daughter of the Tory Jacobite Primrose should seek to marry this arrogant, Whiggish Cooper.

The meal continued. Clever and perfectly trained servants substituted plate for plate and glass for glass. The conversation was light and frivolous. They talked of field sports, of the races at Newmarket, of cards, gambling, dogs, fashions and the latest witticisms and cattishness at the expense of people of whom he had never heard, or, alternately, of those whose names were so great that to mention them in this ribald fashion seemed almost an affront.

Julian did notice that when the question of horses was mentioned the Lady Angela showed a greater interest. She would forget her elegant poise to lean forward and talk vivaciously for a while.

Horses, thought Julian. They were Lady Angela's favourite topic. Now she was engaged with her father, Sir Guy and Bette Hilton in a discussion about the probabilities and possibilities of the runners at Newmarket. She was topping the conversation and they were listening to her, all save Cooper, who was morosely twisting the stem of his glass and gazing at the changing lights in the wine it held.

"I wish," said Lady Angela suddenly, "that I could enter Champion for the Five Furlongs."

"Champion?" said Bette Hilton, and laughed. "Why, my dear, whatever has come over you? You would match him against the finest thoroughbreds in the land?"

"Why not?" said Angela pertly. "If Champion makes up his mind to do anything, nothing will stop him." She laughed suddenly, almost said something, changed her mind and lapsed into elegant silence.

Julian drew his breath quickly. Of course, that was it! Champion. The horse's name was familiar. The girl he had met that morning chasing her horse had called the beast 'Champion'. He had stopped that horse and handed it over to her, and he had been witty at her expense. A smile flickered on the corners of his lips. Lady Angela had known him, but he, now seeing her completely changed, and disguised behind a mask of feminine elegance, had failed to recognize her. The golden guinea in his pocket was ample proof of what had taken place. He resolved that he must make amends and apologize to the Lady Angela. After all, not to have known a great lady under those circumstances might be accounted as pardonable. He hoped he would have an opportunity of engaging her ladyship in conversation. Perhaps Lady Angela's appearance at so early an hour in the streets of London was part of an escapade and she was fearful that he might disclose it?

A dozen other thoughts and questions came into his mind. He found

suddenly, although nobody seemed to care whether he was engaged in the general conversation or not, he was beginning to enjoy himself. This Angela Primrose was a very pretty girl; a little sulky, perhaps, a little spoilt, but all the same very lovely. He wondered what on earth had ever made her see anything in a fellow like William Cooper.

Julian glanced towards Lord Cooper. The under-butler had come to his lordship's side and was speaking confidentially. There was a lull in the conversation and Julian caught a little of what the servant was saying.

"A Mister Jem Pringle is enquiring for your lordship."

"What's that?" demanded Cooper. "Speak up, man."

"I said, my lord," repeated the servant with deference, "that a Mr. Jem Pringle is waiting upon your lordship. He states that he brings a message from the Cabinet Office. He asks your lordship's pardon that you should be so disturbed."

Cooper's expression changed. He was no longer bored, he was interested. He turned quickly to Lady Primrose.

"You must forgive me. Have I your permission to leave the table? This fellow would never dare to disturb me were it not upon the utmost importance."

Lady Primrose nodded and smiled. "But of course, William. I expect that dear Mr. Pelham wishes to discuss a matter of the greatest importance with you."

If William Cooper caught anything of the insincerity in her voice he did not betray it. He rose stiffly to his feet and walked across to kiss Lady Primrose's hand.

"You will forgive me, I know," he whispered.

"But certainly, my dear William," said Mary Primrose.

He moved on to stand beside Angela.

"My dear, do I see you tonight? Have we an engagement that we should grace with our presence?"

Angela sighed expressively. "No, William, I think tonight we have an opportunity to go to our beds at a respectable hour. Tomorrow, of course, there is the reception at my Lady Dacre's."

"Ah, of course, of course," he agreed.

Lord Cooper swept his eyes round the rest of the company.

"Bette, my dear, I eat out my heart until I see you playing again."

He bent a little stiffly to Lord Primrose. "Thank you, sir, for your hospitality. Your claret is beyond reproach. Tell me the name of your wine-shipper. I'd like to put my hand upon a dozen of them."

"I'll send you them, my dear William. Accept them as a gift from me."

Lord Cooper received this largesse with studied grace. He moved stiffly towards the door, which was opened for him. He bowed and was gone.

Conversation languished. The meal was over and the time had come to leave the table. Lord Primrose signed to his wife.

"My dear," he suggested.

Lady Primrose rose to her feet and gave the gesture for Angela and Mrs. Hilton to follow her.

Bette was already fluttering with a host of excuses. There was a rehearsal

at the 'Lane'. She must go at once. Her statement gave Sir Guy the excuse he wanted. He had only come there in the hopes of meeting Bette, and now that she was going he would go also to act as escort at the side of her chair.

Lord Primrose took his excuses curtly. He had little use for his nephew and even less for Mrs. Hilton. He registered a vow to have it out with Mary and to see to it that the play actress from now onwards should not be so *persona grata* in his household.

The men rose to their feet and bowed, whilst the ladies, led by Lady Primrose, left the room. Sir Guy hesitated and followed them out.

"A glass of brandy?" suggested Lord Primrose to Doctor King, who had moved his place to take a chair beside him.

"No, thank you, Arthur," said the doctor, and shook his head.

Lord Primrose did not extend the offer to Julian but took brandy himself, and warmed the glass with his hands.

"Jem Pringle," said Julian suddenly, speaking his thoughts aloud.

"The devil!" exclaimed Primrose, resenting the interruption.

"Yes?" said Doctor King encouragingly. "Julian, what have you on your mind?"

Julian hesitated. "That was the name written in my hat—the hat I grabbed and which belonged to somebody in the party that set upon us on the Ightham Road. It's a common name; at least, Jem is common and Pringle is common, but I'm wondering if there is any combination which gives a clue."

"How do you mean?" said Lord Primrose. His interest had quickened. "Are you accusing Lord Cooper, the Solicitor-General, and my—eh—prospective son-in-law, of being a party to this nefarious attack upon the doctor? Speak up, young fellow. What do you mean?"

Julian regarded his employer calmly. He realized he had made an impression, and Lord Primrose was showing a greater interest than hitherto.

"Come on, sir! Come on!" urged his lordship, and over his shoulder to Boulter: "Give Mr. Brett a glass of brandy. Perhaps it will loosen his tongue."

"May I speak openly, sir?" asked Julian.

"As open as you like," retorted Primrose, and exchanged a glance with Doctor King.

"Another rising is in the air, my lord," said Julian slowly. "Lord Cooper in his office directs the counter-measures taken upon the Hanoverians' behalf. You try to throw sand into his eyes by permitting his engagement to the Lady Angela, sir. Do you not think that he also attempts to throw sand in our eyes? By pretending to be so susceptible to your daughter's charms?"

"My daughter's charms!" snapped Primrose. "How dare you, sir!"

Doctor King leant forward. "Arthur, don't make it so difficult for him. You forget that he works on our side, and he seeks to help us and the Cause."

"Very well, very well," said Primrose. "Continue, Mr. Brett."

"Why, only this," said Julian. "It does not take great powers for me to



see that a *mariage de convenance* is afoot. The Lady Angela cares little for Lord Cooper."

The doctor looked across at Lord Primrose. "Arthur, there's no need for annoyance. This Jem Pringle, whoever he may be, provides a link, the very link that I've been searching for. Westmorland saw Cooper on the Canterbury Road. I was ejected from my living by order of the Archbishop of Canterbury—remember that! The Whigs would know the exact hour that my inhibition would take place, and what was easier than to place a bogus coachman on the box? We know what happened next, but let us take this further. Julian, in the *mêlée*, came by a hat. At Townend's in Cheapside this morning the name of Jem Pringle was discovered written inside the hat-band. This afternoon, at dinner, we hear that Jem Pringle awaits upon Lord Cooper. Two threads that cross each other and make the first foundation of a spider's web."

"I begin to see things." Lord Primrose glanced at Julian and smiled for the first time. "Thank you, Mr. Brett. This plot is thickening; they are starting to move."

"Yes," agreed Doctor King. "They are moving, Arthur, and we are doing nothing. It's our turn to lead, and the quicker the better. We know what strength we have in England, but our contact with Scotland is vague."

Primrose agreed. "That's what Beaufort and Westmorland say, but what can we do? Some of Lord Elibank's despatches have been intercepted, there's no continuity in them. Archibald Cameron is watched, Sir Hugh Paterson is in no better condition. Since Sharpe was killed I have had no one to send and only by direct contact can we be certain of our information." He shook his head wearily.

Doctor King refused to accept this hopeless attitude. "We are committed to the service of the Stuart Cause and to the Restoration of King James upon the British throne. Prince Charles is at Flushing, he has collected ten thousand muskets, the King of France has filled his treasure chest, and he awaits word from us."

"I know, I know," agreed Lord Primrose. "But I also remember the Fifteen and the 'Forty-five. This time there must be no mistake, and without Scotland we can do nothing. I thought that we had fooled Cooper, but now I am not so sure that it is not he who has fooled us."

"Wait," said Doctor King. "You have Julian Brett. Nobody knows him. He is too lately joined to your service to have been circularized. Why not send him to Scotland? He can contact Elibank, Paterson and the Murrays. He can bring back a true picture."

"Send Brett?" repeated his lordship mechanically. He did not see the eager expression in Julian's face, or catch the sincerity of Doctor King's words and gesture.

"Arthur," said King, and a directness had come into his voice, "we are too far in this to draw back. You are not the only leader, the others will go on if you drop out. You have made the excuse that Sharpe is dead and your hands are tied, but that excuse is over. Julian Brett has joined you and he is eager to serve the Cause. He has done so once and will do so again, won't you, Julian?"

"Why, yes, sir," said Julian earnestly. "That is why I am here."

"When?" asked Lord Primrose. "When shall we send Julian Brett to Scotland?"

Doctor King rose to his feet and paced quickly up and down the dining-room.

"Tomorrow morning," he said suddenly. "Tomorrow morning at dawn let Julian start out. We can give him letters to our friends and they will pass him on, they will make sure that he has horses all the way. Let him go to the Scots and find what they say and if they are ready. At least we will know how sets the wind and what our message is for Flushing."

"Agreed," said Lord Primrose. He looked across at Julian Brett. "You shall start at dawn tomorrow, Brett. Please leave us, I have matters to discuss with Doctor King. Your papers, money and letters of credit will be ready for you in good time."

"Thank you, sir." Julian had risen. He bowed to the Earl of Primrose and Doctor King.

Julian left the dining-room of Primrose House in a mixture of feelings. Well, if he was a soldier of fortune and a materialist this was the only way in which to gain advancement and his heart's desire. He walked slowly along the corridor, pursing his lips and thinking. Suppose they were successful, suppose the Jacobites were able to restore the Stuarts. The rewards would be very great. The twist of a card—gambler's luck—the throw of a coin. At the thought of a coin he smiled and thrust his hand into his pocket. He took out the golden guinea he had rived from the infuriated coster. He stood gazing at it as it lay in the palm of his hand. The Lady Angela—what a pretty girl, and yet he knew he liked her better as he had seen her that early morning with the real high colour of youth in her cheeks, when there had been no rouge, powder, patches, and the artifices of high fashion. A golden guinea? Well, that had come from the streets of London, and thereby lay an omen.

The tapping of feminine shoes upon the polished floor made him turn quickly. Lady Angela was coming towards him, and he drew aside to let her pass. He cogitated whether he should speak to her or wait for her to speak first. She looked so haughty and arrogant, and, after all, he must learn to keep his place.

Angela came abreast of him. For a moment she seemed uncertain, but finally she made up her mind and stopped.

"Mr. Brett," she said a little plaintively. "I am not a good play actress."

"No, my lady?" said Julian. "But that is a sweeping admission to make."

She shook her head and smiled. "You were very rude to me, Mr. Brett."

"I ask your ladyship's pardon, I did not know who you were."

She tossed her head. "Is there any excuse for you to be rude to a damsel in distress? Is there any apology in pleading ignorance of identity?" She pursed her lips with the question, touching a corner with her little finger and smoothing the carmine.

"Again I ask your pardon," said Julian, and bowed. "At least I was able to stop your horse."

"I'll give you that," she said grudgingly. "Or else by now Champion and I would be at Land's End." She shrugged her shoulders. "You hold a secret, Mr. Brett. I thought by making myself modish I might disguise myself sufficiently so that you would make no comparison between the dishevelled female of this morning and as I am at this moment. I underestimated your intelligence. Now I must ask you to respect the secret of a girlish escapade, rather a chapter of accidents, which culminated in our first meeting."

"Why, surely, my lady," said Julian quietly. "Although the memory of it will be somewhat of a treasure to me."

She flushed. "There is no need for fine speech, Mr. Brett. Let us leave it at that. We share a confidence and we respect it. Let us seal the bargain."

"What other answer can I give? And, if I may be permitted, can I restore something to your ladyship which I believe was extracted from you by threats?"

"What's that?" she asked guardedly.

Julian did not answer. With a quick movement he placed the guinea upon the back of her mittened hand and it lay there glittering.

"A golden guinea, my lady," he said quietly. "I know that you were angry with me, but if it will give you any consolation that blackguard of a coster was much angrier when I took his ill-gotten gains."

"Oh!" said Angela. "You mean . . .?" She did not finish the sentence. Instead, she grabbed the guinea and, turning quickly, hurried away with a rustling of silks and considerable speed.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE ROAD TO THE NORTH

NEXT morning at dawn Julian Brett started his journey north. He had hoped that somehow or other he would have been allowed another glance at Angela, but this pleasure was denied him. He only took his midday meal with the family. In the evening his food was brought to his room by footmen, who showed by their superciliousness what they thought of him when their master's back was turned. However, Julian had borne this scant civility without comment. He had felt that gentlemen's gentlemen were a strange type of people, and nothing save achievement would interrupt their outlook.

As Julian rode away northwards towards Highgate he felt a different man. The morning was crisp and pleasant and Ranger, the big grey horse he rode, was a fine, powerful animal. He mounted Highgate Hill and London slipped behind him to lie in a haze of smoke. The City became almost blotted out, and he felt this symbolic in that he had thrown off the mantle of inaction and that stirring deeds lay ahead.

He turned his mind back to think of Lady Angela. This strange engagement with Lord Cooper was quite beyond his comprehension, and even the remarks of Lord Primrose and Doctor King threw little real light on a strange situation.

In Angela he recognized complete insincerity; she was acting a part and playing it with all the ability of a stage actress. He felt sure that the flamboyant Bette Hilton could not acquit herself better, yet where was it going to lead? Would these Primroses, if the worst came to the worst, sacrifice their only child to the agonies of an unhappy marriage? Julian tried to dismiss these thoughts and kicked his heels into Ranger's side. The horse, who had been ambling, broke into a trot, and he let him have his head, flicking him into an unwilling gallop. At last he reined in and let his mount get his breath back, and now, riding with loose reins, he examined his pistols and saw to it that the caps were fitted and the pans clean. Highgate had a bad name for footpads and highwaymen, and once before he had been caught by the Hanoverian pursuivants who disguised themselves under the cloak of lawlessness. However, he thought, this time there was nothing on him which could give a clue to his real activities. Lord Primrose and Doctor King had been concise in their instructions. Word of mouth was safer than any written document. He was to proceed to Glasgow, to seek out Lord Elibank; he was to display the signet ring bearing the Primrose arms which he wore on the little finger of his left hand. That would be his introduction, and, moreover, this same ring would find him mounts and safe lodgings on the road to the north.

The journey northward was a tedious business. A man could ride comfortably some sixty miles between sunrise and darkness. Once night came movement was too dangerous, and Julian found in the days that followed that his journey over the four hundred odd miles was a lonely and monotonous business. The Jacobites certainly had an excellent organization, and his first stop was at Essendon. Here at the Wheatsheaf Inn he was given food and instructions as to the next place he must call where he would find food, lodging and a remount. This was at Huntingdon, and from thence he moved northwards in easy stages to Stamford, Newark, Doncaster, York, Catterick. Here he swung away to the west, through Bishop Auckland, Towlaw, Corbridge and Otterburn, making northwards along the same line as the Roman Watling Street and heading for the pass through the Cheviots at Carter Bar.

After he left Corbridge he entered the No Man's Land, that strange country which, though England and Scotland had been united under one crown for more than a hundred and fifty years, was still domain of the cattle-lifters and the sheep-stealers. Here men cared little or nothing for the King's justice, and were still content to risk their necks for the lifting of a few sheep or the driving off of a herd of cattle.

Doctor King had warned him that in these regions he might be molested, but there was only one moment when he was in any fear of such an occurrence. This was just outside Otterburn. A pedlar stopped him and asked him for a piece of bread. Julian obliged and opened up his holsters to give the fellow something to eat. Then from behind him there came the whistle of a musket

ball and the report as the weapon was discharged. Julian thought no more of charity on the road but clapped spurs into his horse's sides and galloped away. When he was at a safe distance he had looked back to discover the shepherd had been joined by half a dozen other rough-looking men and that they were all shading their eyes and gazing after him. Fortunately the distance between them was too great for further musketeering.

Once in Scotland, he stopped his first night at Jedburgh. Here the ruins of the fine old Abbey brought memories of the troublous times and the great religious upheaval. Jedburgh was a Royal Borough and created Royal by the Stuart Kings of Scotland. Also, its very walls exuded traditions and memories of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Oxford was too imbued with the Hanoverian ideal to spend much time or pity upon the tragic, lovely Queen. Julian had been taught to accept her as a wanton, a woman who sent men dancing to their doom, and all for the love of her. But Kerr of Ferniehurst, a good old Jacobite squire with whom he stayed, told another tale as they sat over dinner.

"Mr. Brett," said the grizzled Kerr, "the Stuarts have even been great lovers, and they have always loved with their hearts and ne'er with their heads. So they lost their heads and we keep them in our hearts."

With guttering candles and over good French burgundy Julian sat and listened whilst Kerr of Ferniehurst talked. He told the story of Mary almost as if he knew her, as if he could go out of a still Summer's night and speak with the tall, lovely, auburn-headed Queen and feel once again her impelling attraction.

"They couldna' resist her," said Kerr. "No, Mr. Brett, they couldna' resist her. First there was the Dauphin of France, and after him that poor creature Darnley. And then there was Chastelard and that great brute of a man, Jamie Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell. Hermitage Castle is close by here, and that's where they say it all started, and you'll know how it all ended."

They talked on about Mary Stuart and the Stuart Cause deep into the night, with an old servitor with toothless gums and a strange elfish grin to bring them fresh wine each time a bottle was emptied.

"Aye," said the squire, "and if we love and serve the Stuarts as you and I surely do, then there is one thing we must never be forgetting. When a Stuart falls in love, no matter how and when, there's such a tumult in him—or in her for that matter—that he'll forget all else."

The next morning Julian rode out again, and following the Kerr's instructions soon hit upon the Glasgow Road. The going was atrocious and his lean-flanked Scottish horse was often up to its fetlocks in the mud.

Jedburgh to Selkirk, and Peebles for the night. The Old Tontine gave him shelter and a fine buxom Scotch serving-lass intimidated by a bright eye and a show of ankles beneath her skirts that there was little limitation to which her Scottish hospitality might not be extended.

But Julian was too tired to bother about such gallantries. All he wanted was a good meal and a good night's rest, for he knew that the next morning he must be on the Glasgow Road bright and early, and it was more than a week since he rode out of London.

. . . . .

On the outskirts of the famous village of Bannockburn stood the square, somewhat forbidding mansion of Sir Hugh Paterson. The house was built in the dour Scotch style, with great blocks of granite at its corners and between them sullen-looking yellow bricks. The culture of gardens about houses, although started by the French influence on the Scottish Court, had not really spread, so that the Manor—as it was called—stood surrounded by a small expanse of close-cropped lawn interspersed with shrubs, which quickly changed for the home meadows, which in turn merged into the cold majestic countryside.

Old Hughie Paterson, as his tenants and crofters described him, was a dour man. It was only with the greatest political alacrity that he had escaped Hanoverian reprisal at the conclusion of the 'Forty-five. Undoubtedly he had been compromised with the Stuart Rising, but because he had the habit of procrastination he had been able to delay openly taking up arms until the tide had run against the Cause. Whereupon he had then been able ostensibly to abandon Prince Charles with many protestations of Hanoverian loyalty. This change of front had not entirely saved him, for His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland and the Whigs had named Paterson the 'Old Fox' and ranked him only a little less perfidious than the change-coat Lord Lovat, who paid his penalty on the scaffold of Tower Hill.

Paterson had been heavily fined both in money and in land. He had been confined to his estates and forbidden even the privilege of attending the Glasgow markets. Such restrictions had done nothing to improve old Hughie's temper. Throughout his life he had been a man who roamed at will. As a youth he had travelled abroad, fought as a mercenary and sold his sword to the highest bidder. Later, when he had inherited from his father, he had roamed the length and breadth of Scotland in search of field sport or alternately meddling in politics as the notion and the season took him.

In the midst of the troubles and persecutions which came after the subduing of the 'Forty-five Jean Paterson, his angular, shrewish wife, had died. Once upon a time she had been a beauty and the toast of the countryside, and when Hughie had married her the world had reckoned him a lucky man. But a continuous flow of misfortunes had brought her early to the grave.

Jean Paterson had been born a Walkinshaw and her brother was none other than that same Walkinshaw who, years before, had helped the Chevalier Wogan in the preliminary arrangements for the rescue of the Princess Clementina Sobieski from Austria. Mr. Walkinshaw had been the Jacobite agent in Vienna at that time and it had fallen to his lot to provide a wife of sufficient regal social status for the Old Pretender.

Whilst Mr. Walkinshaw was continuing his duties as the Jacobite agent he married a Scottish lady, and the first years of their married life were spent at Rome, where the Old Pretender held his 'shadow' Court. Here their first child, Clementina—named after the Jacobite 'Queen'—was born. But when the child was only two years of age her father and mother were transferred to another post in Germany. Here a second daughter, Catherine, was born, and from the moment of her arrival into this world Fate played a hand in

the strangest manner. Mrs. Walkinshaw came from Whig stock. Though she loved her husband very dearly she felt instinctively that he was on a losing side, and therefore with Scotch canny she played for safety. At about the same period as she was delivered of Catherine, the Princess of Saxe-Gotha also had a daughter, the Princess Augusta, and as was the fashion of the time a child of gentle birth was selected to be educated and brought up with the young Princess. The choice fell upon Catherine Walkinshaw, for the Saxe-Gothas wished their daughter to be brought up with a good knowledge of the English language. The two little girls from that moment onwards had developed a great friendship and Mrs. Walkingsaw felt content in the fact that her Whig influence had been sufficient to assure a future for at least one of her children.

On the other hand, Clementina leaned to her father's ideals and politics. She was a Jacobite, bred and born, and her schooling took place in Rome, which was a very nest of Stuart aspirations. The results were obvious: the father and the elder daughter were willing and anxious to pledge their all for the Cause, whilst the mother and younger daughter basked in the favour of the German Hanoverian influence.

The complications of the Walkinshaw family were not the least of old Hughie Paterson's troubles. Clementina had been most blatant in the favours she had bestowed upon Prince Charles Edward Stuart during his stay at Glasgow after the retreat from Derby. Readily she had donned the White Cockade, she had attended the Young Pretender's balls and receptions in the most enthusiastic manner. She had rushed in where other ladies had decorously held back, and became more outrageously a Jacobite than even her father had ever dared to declare himself.

On the other hand, Catherine Walkinshaw had come to England in the train of the Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, who was surprisingly selected as the Consort of Frederick, Prince of Wales.

When the days of reckoning had come, the Whigs had sought to punish Clementina for her lightness of heart. However, it was supposed that her sister spoke in her favour in the right quarters. Over the matter of Flora Macdonald the Whigs had learnt that it was bad policy to persecute female Jacobites. Therefore they stayed their hand, and Clementina, although an indictment for treason was prepared against her, was allowed to go untried and unpunished.

Clementina's Bonnie Prince Charlie escaped and went 'over the water'. The Jacobites and the Whigs lampooned her in song. 'Oh, my Darling Clementine' was a ribaldry of the time, and she learnt what it was to sit upon the stool of repentance. Her Tory friends were scattered and the Whigs, one and all, cold-shouldered her. Most of her father's possessions had been torn away from him before he died, and after death only the small patrimony which was her sister's had been allowed to remain. Thus Clementina had found herself in dire want for even the merest necessities of life, and she was forced to go to the Manor at Bannockburn and become the housekeeper to her irate and disappointed uncle, Hughie Paterson.

. . . . .

Though by season it was Spring, by weather it was nearer Winter. A cold north-east wind whistled about the village of Bannockburn; it bent the trees to its blast, rattled about the gables of the crofts and sent the smoke from the chimneys scurrying and scattering into the air. The crows were a-wing, twisting and twirling as they rose and fell upon the eddies of air or melancholy cawing from the high trees on which they essayed to build their nests. The streams were in spate running peat-filled and turbulent and the sheep and the cattle, well thinned by the plundering hands of Cumberland's men, stood rear end to the wind in whatever shelter they could find.

In the library of the Manor, a bare, stone-flagged, oak-beamed and low-hung room, six men were sitting. At the top of the ill-polished table old Hughie Paterson pulled morosely at an unlit churchwarden pipe. On his right sat the hatchet-faced Patrick, Lord Elibank, and on his left the Honourable Alexander Murray, brother of his lordship and member of the House of Commons. Half-way down and on the left side, before a mass of books and papers, was seated Doctor Archibald Cameron, a quiet man with an academic face and the slim hands of a physician. Archibald Cameron was a Doctor of Medicine and he had followed the Prince in the Rising of the 'Forty-five to serve rather in his profession than as a rebel. He had done good service in tending the wounded and the alleviation of pain, and more, his help had been freely given to the Hanoverians and Whigs, who had suffered wounds or injury. This impartiality on his part had come to the notice of the Whig Government in London, and it was for this reason alone that he had escaped the gallows.

At the farther end of the table sat the Cameron of Lochiel and McDonell of Lochgarry, two Highland leaders and outlaws.

"Well?" said Hughie Paterson, rising to his feet and taking a taper and lighting it at the fire. "Well?"

Nobody spoke, and Sir Hugh lighted his pipe and blew the smoke slowly into the air.

"You can speak your minds, gentlemen. You're safe enough here. Willie Scott, the pursuivant, has five golden guineas in his pocket and he'll not be over keen about the comings and goings at the Manor until he's drunk it, anyway. . . . I told him I had a few friends coming to shoot over the moors with me and promised him a brace of black-cock if we were lucky enough."

Cameron of Lochiel sniggered. "Aye, Scott'd believe that. Though it's a good thing your Whig friends left you your fowling pieces, Hughie, for you'll never catch a black-cock by throwing your cap at him."

A chuckle went round the table. It was a matter of some amusement the ends to which Hughie Paterson had gone to gain permission from the Secretary for Scotland to use his sporting gun, for after the 'Forty-five no man had been allowed a firearm of any sort if he were suspected of the White Cockade.

Hughie shook his head. "And he'd never shoot a black-cock on a day such as this," he vouched. "But we're after bigger game and, anyway, there's a brace of cock hanging in the larder, shot two days since, as will fine suit Willie Scott."



"What's the bigger game?" asked Doctor Cameron.

"You know what it is," said Lord Elibank shortly. "My Lord Primrose has sent a carrier pigeon to Moniaive with the news that he is sending up his agent here. The bird came in eight days ago and the fellow is due to arrive any hour."

"Unless they've shot him on the way like they've done the rest of Primrose's agents, damn them!" grunted the Cameron of Lochiel.

Paterson ignored the trend of the conversation. Other of the men would have spoken, but he brought them back to the matter under discussion.

"What will we do?" he asked quickly. "Primrose speaks for the English Jacobite Lords, though he is a Scotsman. What Primrose, Westmorland, Beaufort and the rest would know is do we rise in Scotland when the Prince sets foot in England?"

Cameron of Lochiel pursed his lips. "And what will we rise with, Hughie? There's hardly a musket in the length and breadth of the Highlands."

"Aye," agreed MacDonell. "Is the Prince sending muskets to Scotland as well as to England? And what about boots for the men's feet? And what about cannon to face Cumberland's artillery?"

"What's your information on that?" asked Murray. "And don't let's forget coats to keep them warm and food to fill their stomachs. Men can't fight hunger and an enemy at one and the same time."

Silence fell again. Old Hughie took peat from the basket beside the curb and threw it in great lumps on to the fire, where it splattered and smouldered and sent wafts of pungent smoke into the room.

There came a knock on the door.

"Come in," bade Hughie Paterson gruffly.

The door opened slowly and Clementina Walkinshaw appeared. She stood still, looking at the men, and the flickering flames from the fire showed her face and figure. She was no beauty, this Clementina Walkinshaw, but she had a fine full figure which she displayed to advantage. There was a liveness and height about her and her carriage was regal. Her face was attractive, almost oriental in type, for her eyes were set far apart with an up-turn at their corners. Her lashes and brows heavy, and her nose big and broad at the bridge, which seemed to harmonize with her high cheek-bones and crisping black hair. Her mouth was big and friendly, almost generous, and her teeth large, very white and even, whilst her chin was firm and determined but softened by two dimples which appeared incongruously when she smiled.

"Well?" said Hughie.

"I was wondering," said Clementina, "if you'd be wanting candles." She smiled apologetically. "You're like conspirators all sitting there in the dark."

Her remark, though innocent, was unfortunate. This was the wrong moment to speak of conspirators or conspiracy.

"Away with you, niece!" ordered Hughie Paterson. "Away! When I have need of you I'll call you. We've no time for woman's cackle."

The words were said savagely, but Clementina took them with a smile.

She glanced about the table at the shadowy faces of the men, and her eyes turned back to her uncle.

"It's as you like, Uncle Hughie. I only offered to be of service." She was gone, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

"Clementina Walkinshaw," said Lord Elibank slowly.

"You know fine that she's my niece and that she's Clementina Walkinshaw," snapped Hughie Paterson. "My lord, as I once heard a preacher say, relations are friends God gave you and you'd never choose yourself."

Alexander Murray looked up quickly. "And for all that it was a mistake to bring her here. There's no smoke without fire, and all Scotland holds that she was compromised with the Prince."

Lochiel laughed coarsely. "Oh, aye. Oh, aye," he chuckled. "And why shouldna' the Prince have a warming-pan for his bed the same as any other man?"

"Whist!" said MacDonell, for he saw the angry look that had come into Hughie Paterson's face.

Lord Elibank changed the subject. "Don't let's argue about women. What do you say, Alexander? And you, Archibald Cameron? Does Scotland rise with England if the Prince lands again?"

Lochiel shook his head. "That's easier to say than bring about. There are too many Hessians and Dragoons in Scotland, and they've bled the clans white. What of Ireland?"

Archibald Cameron extracted a paper from a pink-taped bundle which lay in front of him. He glanced at it carefully, holding it towards the fire-light and reading with difficulty.

"There's a letter here from Macnamara, gentlemen. He says that Ireland is ready to support the Stuart Cause. They await the word from us and from England. We can trust them to rise, on conditions."

"What are those conditions?" asked Lord Elibank.

"The same," answered Doctor Cameron. "The establishment of the Church of Rome throughout Ireland as the accepted and national religion."

"Is that not too much?" said Hughie Paterson. "Must we fight for a Church as well as for a King? Religion makes blood run hotter in men's veins than ever does the question of kingship."

Alexander Murray shrugged his shoulders. "I'd rather have Ireland and Rome than no Ireland at all. I have another plan, and maybe it's a better one. I have spoken to Patrick about it." He looked towards Lord Elibank, who nodded. "What is the use of cutting off the tail of the viper when we still leave the head? George II is on the throne of England and possession is nine points of the law. Frederick, Prince of Wales, is the heir apparent, and besides him there is his son, Prince George, to succeed him when the time should come. The Hanovers are well established in numbers, and provided there is a King, and their line remains, they can summon half Germany to crush us if we rise."

Hughie Paterson grunted. "Yes, and they've paid enough for that with their subsidies. King George's golden horsemen, eh?"

"Exactly," said Alexander Murray. "But they have made one mistake, this House of Hanover: they all live together in close proximity. King George

is at St. James's Palace. He goes rarely to Windsor. The Prince of Wales alternates between York House and Leicester House. The Princess of Wales and her children are at Leicester House. All their eggs are in one basket. Mr. Pelham and his administration have lulled these Hanoverian usurpers into a false idea of their own security. If we could place five hundred resolute men about those palaces, and if at a given signal they could rush the guards and reach the apartments of the usurpers, few throats need be cut and the whole situation would be in our hands."

As Murray spoke his voice grew tense with excitement. He was unfolding a plan which he had kept carefully hidden in his heart.

"Well, gentlemen?" he asked. "What do you say?"

Again there was silence.

"I do not like murder," said Hughie Paterson gruffly. "This is not war or battle for a rightful cause, it is assassination. How can we hope to gain if we strike down men, women and children in their beds?"

Murray glowered. "What difference, Hughie?" he asked. "Surely it is only a matter of degree? If the headsman takes off a head on Tower Hill to please a king, that is not murder; if the hangman rips out the bowels of a man, that is not assassination; if white slaves who were once free Scotsmen, die in the Barbados that is not untimely death; then why should we not use the knife or a pistol to serve our ends? Justice is made to suit kings, and if the kings do not suit us, why should we respect their justice?"

Elibank supported his brother, but Doctor Cameron, Hughie Paterson, Lochiel and MacDonell gave no utterance. They could not bring themselves to speak in favour of the scheme.

"You will not have it?" asked Alexander Murray, his fingers fidgeting. "You would rather that the Hanovers remain and the Stuarts are denied their own."

"Enough!" growled Hughie Paterson. "Let's fight like men, we're not assassins."

Murray looked angrily at him. "I am a Member of Parliament, a Member of the Commons House in London. I can gain access—my brother is a peer; he, too, can open doors through which trusty men can pass and do their business. The Stuarts grow grey and we sit here arguing and bickering. Only the Irish are ready. England is as bad as we. Primrose, Westmorland, my Lord Duke of Beaufort and the rest use the muscles of their throats in talk while their arms grow flabby for want of action. What of my plan? Let's have the answer; are you frightened of it?"

The men about the table fidgeted uneasily. There was a reasoning in Alexander Murray's strategy which, though horrible in its conception to the civilized mind, was at least a plan of action which could bring forth results.

The wind went howling louder than ever outside the Manor, and brought down the choking fumes of the peat smoke from the chimney.

"Listen!" said Hughie Paterson suddenly. "Listen!"

"Horse-hooves," grunted Archibald Cameron, "and coming at a fair gallop by the sound of them."

"How many?" said Lochiel, and his hand slid down to a hidden pistol.

"Only one," said Lord Elibank. "One horse, one man, and that man, I wager, the agent of my Lord Primrose."

"Then let us have a proposition to give him when he comes, something to take back to the English Jacobites," demanded Alexander Murray.

"What do you say, gentlemen?" asked Hughie Paterson. "Let's have your answer."

"It is, at least, a plan," said Lochiel shrilly. "What say you, MacDonell? It is, at least, a plan."

Lord Elibank nodded his head. "It is something to go on. Those ten thousand muskets would mean more if the head was off the serpent."

Doctor Archibald Cameron dipped a quill pen into the inkpot before him. He started to write slowly.

"The devil, man!" shouted Hughie Paterson in alarm. "You would not put this business on paper?"

The doctor stopped his writing. "As you wish, Hughie—as you wish."

The horse-hooves were clattering on the cobbles of the yard. A groom's lantern went flickering across the window. A man shouted and another called back an answer. The door burst open unceremoniously and Clementina Walkinsaw appeared. She had changed her dress from stuff to taffeta and seemed more feminine and natural in her frills and flounces. She carried a tray of candles already lighted and began setting them about the room.

"Uncle, you can't expect the English gentleman to meet you in darkness. We must show him that the Scots are a civilized people." She put the candles in their places about the room and went to tend the fire and sweep the hearth. This done, she closed and barred the window shutters and came back to the table. "Old Robbie's gone to bring him in," she said. "I don't know whether you heard, but it's Lord Primrose's agent who's arrived. They put him on the road to Bannockburn when he reached Shawfield, Glasgow."

There were the sounds of footsteps in the flagged passage and of voices speaking in an undertone. The men about the table were already standing and their eyes fixed upon the door. Old Robbie appeared in it, a bent, birdlike figure.

"May it please ye, Sir Hugh," he croaked. "Here's Mister Julian Brett come from the Earl of Primrose and wishing to have speech with ye." He drew aside and Julian stepped forward. "Mr. Julian Brett," wheezed Robbie. "Mister Julian Brett to have speech with the maister."

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### A WHITE ROSE OF SCOTLAND

FORTY-EIGHT hours later Julian Brett sat up in his bed, his coat about his shoulders, and sought to analyse his thoughts. For two whole days he had been a guest in the Manor at Bannockburn, and yet he wondered whether he

was a guest at all, or rather some form of strange prisoner whose very movements were watched and whose merest excursions were curtailed.

Sir Hugh Paterson certainly lived up to his reputation. He was a dour old man who never spoke two words when one would do and who preferred not to utter at all. Of the other Jacobites he had seen nothing since the night of his arrival. Very soon after that Elibank and his brother had taken their leave and ridden away, and the Cameron of Lochiel and MacDonell of Lochgarry had followed soon after, going on foot in the manner of Highlanders. Only Doctor Cameron had stayed behind. They had eaten supper together—Julian, Sir Hugh and the doctor—and though Miss Walkinshaw had put the dishes upon the table she had made no effort to sit down with them and had retired the moment they were served.

The next day that strange, gnome-like creature who went by the name of Old Robbie had brought Julian a message in Sir Hugh's hand. This had informed that Sir Hugh was leaving immediately and on pressing business to do with the Cause. He therefore asked Mr. Brett to await his return, as upon that depended much of the message that could be sent to the Lord Primrose and his confederates.

Julian had not minded this chance to rest. The road from London had been arduous. He was saddle-sore and stiff, and the Manor was a comfortable, warm, if a severely furnished, establishment. Moreover, Julian wondered whether he could see more of this Miss Walkinshaw. Naturally, he had heard something of her past and of the strange shadowy liaison that existed between her and Bonnie Prince Charlie. Sir Hugh had not said in his message whether it was his practice to take Miss Walkinshaw with him on his excursions, but as from the moment of his host's departure he had neither sight nor sound of her, he could only assume she had also left the Manor.

"Oh, my darling, Oh, my darling, Oh, my darling Clementine," hummed Julian, watching the white steam of his breath on the window-panes and wondering what on earth could be the second line of this ditty. He hummed a few more bars, lost the tune and started at the beginning again.

The door of his bedroom opened and Old Robbie appeared. He carried a large tray on which was a decanter and a pitcher of water.

"D'ye care fort he Usquebaugh, master?" asked Old Robbie as he set the tray beside the bed. "It makes a good nightcap and they say that Prince Charles Edward Stuart liked it well enough." He tittered, showing a row of toothless gums. "Don't put too much water in it, master, it's bad stuff when it's drowned."

Julian, watched by the eagle eye of Robbie, poured out a measure of whiskey into the glass. He added water as instructed and raising it he tossed it off at a gulp. The effect was to set him coughing, spluttering and choking. His one frantic thought was this was the end, that they had poisoned him and he would never see London and England again. The burning in his throat died down and his breath came more easily.

"Did you say the Prince liked that?" he demanded hoarsely.

Old Robbie nodded emphatically. "Aye," he said. "Aye, he liked it fine."

"Well, I don't," said Julian.

Old Robbie was not to be put off in such a fashion.

"Ye will when ye get the habit of it," he said. "It's the best thing in the world to keep the cold out of ye a time like this."

Julian eyed Robbie thoughtfully. "Do you know where Sir Hugh is and when he's coming back? Can you tell me what's happened to Miss Walkinshaw, his niece?"

"Ask no questions and ye'll be told no lies," said Robbie with considerable profundity.

Julian frowned. "There's another question, Robbie. Why am I not allowed to go out? This is good country—I like shooting with a fowling piece, or fishing a good river, or even walking the moors."

Robbie shook his head. "You'll never get near a bird with the wind high as it is, and all the rivers are in spate, so never a fish will ye catch, and as for walking abroad, you'd best put that notion out of your head." He dropped his voice. "The morning after Sir Hugh rode away, Mr. Brett, the Hanoverian pursuivants were in Bannockburn. They were asking a deal of questions about one thing and another, and they wanted to know if any had seen a young gentleman answering your description. There are too many Jacobites in Bannockburn for the Whigs to fetch much sense out of it, but all the same, seeing is believing, and it would not be right for one of those prying Hanoverians to clap their eyes upon ye."

"They draw their net very wide, don't they, Robbie?" said Julian slowly.

Robbie nodded. "Aye, but the mesh is wide and all, and the clever fish slip through." He turned to go, but Julian stopped him.

"Robbie, what about Miss Walkinshaw?" he asked.

"What about her?" said Robbie.

"Is she here?"

Robbie wrinkled his nose. "She's here and she's no' here," he said. "With her uncle being away, she has gone down to the Manse to lodge with the Minister's wife, and when Sir Hugh comes back again she'll come up to the Manor. Poor lass! With the way they've torn her reputation it'd never do for her to stop under the same roof with a young English gentleman."

"I like the description of the young English gentleman," Julian hesitated. "Robbie, was it true that she and the Prince fell in love?"

Robbie beetled his brows. "Well, master, there's no smoke without fire, as the saying goes. When a man and a maid fall in love with each other, that's the last moment they think of the difference of breeding that lies between them." He went shuffling towards the doorway. Obviously he felt that he had told too much, that his taciturn reserve had been broken by the glib questions of this Sassenach. "Sir Hugh will be back in the morn," he announced as he reached the door, "and ye'll do me a service, sir, if ye'll not repeat any of the conversation we have been having."

Julian heard him move away, his feet padding along the corridor. An owl hooted in the distance, and another close in by the house answered the call. Well, that was proof enough that the pursuivants were not abroad, for owls were careful birds and never gave tongue when there were dangers or strangers near them. The wind blew and rattled against the window-panes.

Julian crossed to the casement. He pulled back the curtains. It was a

bleak windy night with scudding clouds and a weak new moon set high in the heavens. He stood peering out, vaguely seeing forms of trees and bushes in the sparse light. Suddenly a pane shattered above his head as something struck it with tremendous force, and an instant later there came the sound of the discharge of a musket. Julian let drop the curtains and sprang across to extinguish the candle by his bedside. He pulled a pistol from beneath his pillow and went cautiously back to the window. With no light behind he could see better, but there was no sign of anything unusual. After a moment he let the curtains fall again, and finding flint and tinder relighted his candle. He started to search for the object that had shattered the pane, groping about on hands and knees. Close up to the farther wall of the room he came upon a spent musket-ball. He picked it up and glanced at it; the slug was dented with the force of impact. Whoever had fired it had assuredly intended to kill him. This Paterson household was a strange one, for such disturbances as the firing of muskets did not appear to cause undue alarm. There was no sound of movement to be heard. Anyway, he'd better tell Old Robbie about this. Obviously, the pursuivants were back again. He slipped through the doorway and on to the landing. Here a candle was burning and gave him light enough to move forward. He moved silently on tip-toe and paused to listen. Unmistakably, he could hear the sound of a woman weeping. She was crying as if her heart would break, sobs that came from her very heart. He stood listening intently. His mind went immediately to Clementina Walkinshaw. Though it was impossible to recognize a woman's voice by the way she sobbed, there was something which told him this was her. So Old Robbie's explanation about her going to the Manse was a lie. He might have guessed from the glibness it was the well-rehearsed answer to an expected question.

He moved quietly down the corridor, turning away into the passage on the left and towards the sound. In the shadow he lost the light of the candle, but groping with his hands he moved forward. The sobbing had stopped now, and he stood wondering if it would start again. Abruptly the corridor came to an end. There was a white-painted door, which he could dimly make out. He tried the handle. The door was locked. He tried it again, putting more force and rattling the latch.

"Don't!" whispered the voice of Clementina Walkinshaw. "Don't! Mr. Brett, I know it is you. Go back to your room. Please go back to your room at once."

"But can't I help?" began Julian. "Is there nothing I can do?"

Her agitated whisper cut him short. "Go back," she said. "Nothing you can do can help me now. Please go away! Please!" Her voice checked. "Listen!"

A door in another part of the building had opened and slammed. Footsteps were coming quickly. He could hear them on the stone floor, mounting the back staircase, coming up and up.

"Go back!" whispered the agonized voice of Clementina. "Go back!"

He moved quickly away from the door and slipped noiselessly out of the corridor and on to the main landing. Here he stood waiting, listening to the rapidly approaching footsteps, and looking about him for any movement which he could plainly have seen by the light of the candle.

A door was flung open at the end of the corridor and Old Robbie appeared. He also carried a candle in his left hand and a large horse-pistol in the other.

"Mr. Brett," he cried hoarsely. "What are you doing here?"

Whether the gesture he made with the pistol was a menace or to justify his excitement, Julian could not tell. The old man's face was tense and his lips were moving.

"Why are you not in your room, Mr. Brett?" he repeated. "Why are you not in your room?"

Julian shrugged his shoulders. He held out his hand and exposed the musket-ball which lay in his palm. "Look at this."

The old man peered down and his brows wrinkled. Julian almost felt that there was a feeling of relief about him.

"A musket-ball! Has someone been shooting at ye, Mr. Brett? Ah, well, maybe it's ye own fault. There are plenty of Whigs that think the only good Jacobite is a dead one. Come and get to bed with ye. There'll be more trouble this night."

Julian hesitated. This old fellow was compelling him to go back in his room. What did he know and what was he hiding? Why was Clementina Walkinshaw sobbing in her bedroom behind a locked door, and why all this tissue of lies about her going to the Manse?

"Come along with ye, Mr. Brett," said Robbie firmly.

Julian began to move towards his bedroom door and Old Robbie shuffled along beside him.

"Ye'll best be in ye bed tonight and not put your head out of the room," he whispered. "Sir Hugh is back. Maybe they'll tell ye in the morning and maybe they won't, but mark my words, Mr. Brett, sir, there's something stirring this night."

They reached the door of the bedroom.

"Good night, Mr. Brett," said Robbie. "Good night for the second time."

Gruffly, and from a distance, Sir Hugh's voice was calling.

"Are ye there, Robbie? Come along with ye, man."

Sir Hugh's tone was rough and authoritative. Likely as not there was more of the Usquebaugh inside him than was good for him.

"Come along with ye, Robbie!" shouted the baronet. "Come here, and be damned to you!"

"Coming, sir. Coming," piped Old Robbie, and there was more than a quaver of fear in his voice.

. . . . .

The next morning the weather had changed for the better, the wind had died down and a hot sun, unhampered by clouds, was shining. Reacting to such cheerful surroundings, breakfast was almost a pleasant meal. Sir Hugh was dourly jocular and Doctor Cameron, who arrived in time for the meal, told a series of reminiscences of his part in the 'Forty-five. His stories



were not political, but rather personal and with a twist of dry humour in them which was essentially Scotch.

Somewhat unexpectedly, Clementina Walkinshaw appeared at breakfast, and whatever her griefs might have been the night before, she had managed to disguise them. Julian thought that she had taken a little more care with her personal appearance. The flounces of her dress were stiffly goffered, she wore silk stockings and French shoes of brocade, whilst her hair was high-piled and ringleted, and though she wore no powder she had a stylish look about her.

Julian discovered that even the small-talk was interesting. He learnt something of the story of the reprisals which Cumberland and his men had taken, not only upon the Jacobites and the Tories, but all those suspected of leanings in that direction. Houses and crofts had been burnt down, animals lifted, crops burnt and women and children either slaughtered or outraged. Moreover, many personal grudges had been wiped out, and members of clans who had not participated in the Rising were assassinated in the same manner as their more active brethren. The hatred was very deep; these men were waiting for the day and for the moment when they could grasp their claymores again and even the score, but the main difficulty appeared to be that there was no real leader. The Hanoverians and the Whigs had dealt so ruthlessly with Scotland that all the Jacobites of note had either been slaughtered or had fled to exile abroad, and there was no name other than the Prince over the water on which another rising could be hinged.

"So the situation revolves on this one essential," said Julian: "the Prince must come back."

He saw a flush of colour come into Clementina's cheeks. He noticed a meaning glance exchanged between Sir Hugh and Doctor Cameron.

Cameron pursed his lips. "That is what we all hope, Mr. Brett, but this time we must be careful. Another failure must mean the end. We must be sure of ourselves or else——"

He did not finish his sentence. Julian had turned his head to look at Clementina. She rose suddenly from the table and without asking to be excused hurried from the room.

Sir Hugh Paterson waited until the sound of her footsteps had died away.

"Mr. Brett," he said quietly. "You must think this a strange household. You must wonder at queer things that are happening about you."

"If you mean that somebody shot at me last night and a musket-ball shattered the casement of my room?"

Sir Hugh shook his head. "That might happen any time. The Whigs know that we have a messenger with us. As yet, no official action has been taken. The Hanovers wish to soothe Scotland, they are avoiding arrests and upsetting the tranquillity which they hope they have restored. That does not prevent them from taking a pot shot if a young man is foolhardy enough to pull back the curtains and stand with a light behind him."

Julian flushed. Obviously, Old Robbie had given a verbatim report to his master.

"I should have been more careful."

Sir Hugh looked across at Archibald Cameron. "That resolution applies to all of us. If we had been we might have had a Stuart on the throne to-day." He looked thoughtfully at Julian. "Scotland is full of whispers, but secrets are bad things between those who should be allies. Have you heard of my niece, Clementina Walkinshaw, and of His Royal Highness, Prince Charles Edward?"

"Yes," said Julian, "I have heard something, sir."

Doctor Cameron leant forward. "The Prince is a person of the greatest charm, he has a tremendous attraction for the opposite sex." He touched the tips of his tapering fingers together. "After the Retreat from Derby, when the Jacobite Army halted at Glasgow, Miss Walkinshaw and His Royal Highness had many chances of meeting. An affection grew up between them . . . Should I say—an infatuation? How far this developed I cannot say. All I know is that the entire attachment has been a detriment to the Cause."

Sir Hugh nodded his head sombrely. "Yes, Mr. Brett, the Prince has been unwise and Clementina has invited not only censure but calamity for herself. What possible happiness could she have foreseen in such a liaison? Such things as these are not for me to judge, but I speak only for the Cause, and in loyalty I condemn the situation which has arisen."

Julian was amazed. The gravity and force with which Sir Hugh had spoken was intense.

"But, sir," he protested, "the Prince has had a Continental upbringing. I hear that abroad affairs of the heart are not taken so seriously. Cannot this attachment be judged as a passing flight of fancy? Cannot it be forgotten in the major issue of returning the House of Stuart to their heritage?"

"It is not forgotten," said Sir Hugh emphatically. "My niece refuses to accept her *congé* other than it be spoken by the Prince himself and to herself. A woman does not easily forget the man to whom she first gave herself, and if he be a Prince the memory is deeper written. I have tried to reason with her. I have tried to make her see light, but she refuses to accept her own situation with the Prince as being in any relation to the whole Jacobite Cause."

"Sir Hugh," asked Julian, "surely you are too severe? Is this the reason why you keep your niece here a prisoner?"

"A prisoner?" echoed Sir Hugh Paterson, and exchanged a quick and meaning glance with Doctor Cameron.

Julian saw that he had gained an advantage and continued quickly. "Yes, sir, those are the words I used—a prisoner behind locked doors."

"You speak dangerously, Mr. Brett," blurted Sir Hugh.

Doctor Cameron interposed quietly. "Hugh," he said, "let us be frank with Mr. Brett. Miss Walkinshaw came here as a refugee. Before Sir Hugh would offer her the hospitality of his roof he extracted a promise, which was that she would not seek to continue her liaison with the Prince. Now we have good reason to believe she is breaking her word."

Sir Hugh cut in sternly: "I will not mince words, Mr. Brett. I would rather slay my niece with my own hand than think that she would follow

her infatuation and so compromise the Prince with her presence as to ruin the Cause which, next to God, I hold the most sacred."

A silence fell. Against such vehemence there was nothing more to be said. Doctor Cameron sat methodically touching the tips of his fingers together. Sir Hugh gazed sternly in front of him.

The door opened and Old Robbie appeared. He came shuffling to the table.

"Sir Hugh," he said. "Sir Hugh." And there was a quavering agitation in his voice. "I don't know how it has happened, but there's a horse gone out of the stable and Miss Clementina has disappeared. I've searched high and low for her, but there's no sign."

Sir Hugh leapt to his feet. "Clementina!" he bawled. "Clementina!" He hurried from the room, doors banged, and his voice continued shouting. "Clementina! Where are you? Where are you, lass? Come back with you. Clementina!"

Doctor Cameron listened as the hubbub grew fainter and fainter. "She's gone," he said. "Mr. Brett, it's happened as I said it would. The bird has flown. It would have been better if we'd cut her throat as I suggested long since."

Julian shuddered. This was the first time he had been confronted with a cold, callous proposal of murder. He did not know what to say to a man who contemplated this act as if it were an ordinary happening of everyday life.

Cameron shrugged his shoulders. "Don't be alarmed, Mr. Brett. What difference is there between slaying a man in battle because he opposes your Cause or killing a woman because she would ruin it? Surely it is one and the same thing, and if the Stuarts are to come back, as I pray they will, no sacrifice is too great."

Julian jumped to his feet, pushing his chair away so that it scraped upon the boards. "Doctor Cameron," he said, "I cannot continue this conversation. I will have nothing to do with it."

Cameron pursed his lips. "That is as you wish, Mr. Brett. But if I remember I have not asked your collaboration."

The hunt for Clementina continued for the rest of the morning. Sir Hugh alternated between towering temper and moody calculation. All the grooms were despatched to carry out the search; Glasgow was advised by courier to look out for the person of Miss Walkinshaw, but by midday no clue had been discovered. Clementina must have planned her flight and made every preparation. Her room was orderly and her drawers tidy, but the tire-maid realized that garments were missing, and reported the matter to Sir Hugh.

At about two o'clock in the afternoon Sir Hugh grew calm again, and Old Robbie came to Julian with the request that he attend the master in the parlour. He discovered that not only was Sir Hugh waiting for him but also Doctor Cameron, Lord Elibank, his brother, Alexander Murray, the Cameron of Lochiel and MacDonell of Lochgarry. They were seated gravely at the table and Sir Hugh immediately went to business.

"Mr. Brett," he said. "Our answer is ready, and we give it to

you by word of mouth. We propose that you should start for London immediately."

Julian bowed. "At your service, sir."

"I speak for all assembled here and also for the leaders of the Stuart Cause in Scotland. We have come to the conclusion that the House of Hanover is *ultra vires*; I mean by that, its acts of tyranny and repression against the people of Scotland have placed it outside the bounds of common justice. Whilst the Hanovers remain in England the serpent has its head, and in that head are the fangs to strike at us. We mean to cut off the head of the serpent. We intend to send five hundred resolute men to London. They shall travel individually, so that their arrival will not excite suspicion. Once arrived there, and at a given signal, they shall enter the Royal Palace, slay King George, the Hanoverian Prince and Princess of Wales and all members of the Hanoverian succession. This blow shall be struck at a given signal, and once the deed is done, then shall be the moment for Prince Charles Edward to return to England to march upon London and to seize the throne of his forefathers in the name of his father. That is our plan, Mr. Brett, and that is what you must carry to Lord Primrose. We have told you it by word of mouth; it is a secret and we await the reception of our strategy by the English Lords. There is nothing else we have to say, Mr. Brett, nor do we require your views or observations on this matter. Your duty is to carry the message."

"I understand," said Julian slowly. "I will give the message, Sir Hugh. I will make no observations on your plan, for that is not my business, but one thing must I say. I, Julian Brett, have sold my sword to the Cause, but not my knife."

A flush of anger mounted into Sir Hugh's face, but he controlled himself with an effort. He rang the hand-bell which stood on the table beside him, and a moment later Old Robbie appeared in the doorway.

"Have a horse saddled for Mr. Brett," ordered Sir Hugh. "He will start in half an hour."

"Very good, master," mumbled Old Robbie, and withdrew.

"May I ask leave to be excused?" said Julian stiffly.

"Certainly, Mr. Brett." Sir Hugh's lip curled. "And I would warn you, sir, that we have ways and means of knowing if our message is safely delivered to the quarter we desire. The punishment for treachery against the Cause is swift and relentless."

Julian bowed. "So I have gathered, gentlemen. I have been here long enough to appreciate something of your methods." He turned about and walked slowly from the room. He reached the passage and closed the door behind him. He felt a great relief at being out of the room and away from these stern, fanatical men. He wondered why there had been no mention of Clementina. Did they know what had happened to her? Had they caught up with her? Had she met with a fate similar to that planned for the Hanoverian Royal Family? As he mounted the staircase to his bedroom he felt a wave of aversion to the whole business. This was murder—cold-blooded murder.

In the bedroom Old Robbie was already packing the saddle-bags, and

Julian watched his belongings being systematically stowed away. Once this was finished the old man led the way from the room and down the stairs, across the hall and out into the courtyard. Here a groom was standing at the head of the horse that Julian would ride. Apparently Sir Hugh Paterson did not think it worthwhile to come and bid his guest farewell. Julian put his foot into the stirrup and swung his leg across the horse. The groom drew back and Old Robbie pulled his forelock. Julian thrust his hand into his greatcoat pocket, took out a guinea he knew was there and tossed it to him. The old man caught it mechanically.

"God speed ye, sir," he muttered.

Julian dug his heels into the horse's flanks and the animal started forward. He gave it a touch of his spurs and it shambled into a trot. He wheeled away through the gates and out into the roadway. For one instant he looked back. Upon the pillars of the gate were the two great stone orbs symbolical of the power of life and death and, behind, the grim outline of the Manor with its smoke curling fretfully from the chimneys.

He jogged his horse into a canter and hit out upon the Falkirk road. Already Sir Hugh had warned him to keep away both from Glasgow and Edinburgh, for the pursuivants were out. He was to take the road by Airdrie, Coatbridge and Motherwell and he'd find friends at Carstairs who would give him lodging and food for the night and a fresh horse for the morning.

Before he had gone very far the rain started, and the road surface, a track at the best of times, became a quagmire. Going was difficult, and darkness came early because of the thickness of the clouds.

Julian comforted himself with the thought that on a night such as this there would be few Dragoons or pursuivants astir. He rode on, finding the route fairly easily, and reached Carstairs just before midnight. Here he rode at once to the Manse, and a deal of knocking woke up the Reverend Angus Ogilvie, who was a good Jacobite despite all his Presbyterianism. The minister gave him bread and cheese and a tankard of small beer and apologized that there was no bed for him to lie in, but he bade him make himself as comfortable as he could on a horsehair couch before the fire.

"Ye'll have to be away early in the morning," the minister counselled. "There's a good horse in the stable and I'll have him saddled for you, Mr. Brett. The Dragoons were here this afternoon and they'll be here again tomorrow. A wee bird whispered in my ear the loons were on their way, and I put the horse out of reach in nice time." The minister chuckled at his own adroitness.

"Do you think they're after me?" asked Julian.

"How would I know?" said the Reverend Ogilvie. "There are so many rumours about that the Hanovers are like cats on hot bricks." He dropped his voice to a confidential enquiry. "Have you heard tell that Bonnie Prince Charlie is going to land again? Maybe you'll know more about that than I do?"

Julian shrugged his shoulders, and wrapping himself in his greatcoat stretched out upon the couch.

"I know nothing," he said, "save that I'm very tired and very thankful to be in a godly house."

"Aye," said the minister. "Aye. They say the devil himself walks abroad at Bannockburn." He chuckled at his own humour and, picking up the candle, went quietly from the room.

Mr. Kerr of Ferniehurst was delighted to see Julian again. There had been a little trouble, he explained in his naive Scots way, and the Dragoons were out with a vengeance, but the good Jacobites of the Royal Borough of Jedburgh had drawn so many red herrings across the trail that King George's men did not rightly know what they were after.

"You'll find it safer when ye're into England," he said. "They are not so suspicious the other side of the Border." He changed the subject. "How did you get on with them up north, and how sets the wind?"

Julian did not answer.

"Aye," said Kerr. "Ye're a good man for a bad business, and 'Say naught's' a bonny thing. You've been talking to the fanatics. Well—beggars cannot be choosers, and the poor Stuarts are near-beggars for the moment. I'll not ask ye what they said to ye, but I'll give a word of warning for you to take south with ye. Tell my Lord Primrose to watch where he puts his feet."

Julian smiled. "That I shall certainly do, sir, but my instructions are to repeat a message as it was given to me."

Kerr nodded. "And that ye'll surely do."

Julian had enjoyed his night at Jedburgh. He liked the hospitality of Ferniehurst, the pleasantness of the ivy-covered house and the soft foliage of the trees that surrounded it. Jedburgh to him was a warm-hearted borough and the people in it more friendly and less bleak than those he had met with farther north, but the persecution of the Lowlands had not been severe.

As soon as he had finished breakfast Kerr took him out to the stables. He was to have the same horse as he had ridden on from England, a fine bay mare with good lines and more than a touch of the thoroughbred in her.

Whilst the groom was saddling, Kerr of Ferniehurst touched Julian on the shoulder and drew him aside.

"Would ye like a bit of company on the way south?" he asked.

"Company?" said Julian. "Is it safe?"

Kerr shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know whether it's safe enough. I'm asking ye a question. There's a young fellow I've heard of who wants to ride south. He's lodging with the Black Elliots at High Spen."

Julian looked curiously at his host. "Did you plan this?" he asked quickly.

Kerr of Ferniehurst took the straw that he was sucking from his mouth and regarded it thoughtfully.

"If ye ask no questions ye'll be told no lies, but I think the person has a claim to go south with you. I have a feeling that I'm doing you a service in

the suggestion I make. Cast your bread upon the waters and it'll return to ye after many days. That's how the Good Book puts it, near enough."

There was a sound of horse-hooves on the cobbles of the yard, and a horse and rider appeared. Kerr went to greet him.

"So ye've come," he said, "and your mind's made up. Well, I've mentioned you to Mr. Brett and here he is. Ye'd best make your own arrangements with him." He beckoned to Julian, who walked slowly across.

The horseman had slipped out of the saddle and was standing holding the bridle. The horse's head was between him and Julian Brett, but Julian noticed that the hand that held on to the bridle was slim and neatly gloved. He came round to where Kerr stood ready to make the introduction.

Julian saw a slim young man, dressed in tight-fitting well-cut breeches, half-boots and a heavy-caped riding coat. On his head he wore a tricorn set at a jaunty angle and his hair was neatly peruked and ribboned.

"Mr. Brett," introduced Kerr of Ferniehurst. "Will ye meet a friend of mine?"

Julian was gazing at the figure before him. There was something tremendously familiar in the poise and features. Those absurdly small hands and feet and the face with its high cheek-bones and oval eyes, and a mouth which was anything but masculine.

Kerr of Ferniehurst was watching him narrowly. "Well?" he asked, "there's nothing to be tongue-tied."

In an instant the solution came to Julian. "Clementina Walkinshaw!" he gasped. "Miss Walkinshaw! What are you doing dressed like this? You want to come south with me disguised as a man?"

She nodded her head emphatically. "Yes, Mr. Brett. You must take me south. I cannot start to explain now, but perhaps you know the secret of the Manor. They meant to kill me, and I don't want to die. I want to live, and love, because I am in love! You must take pity on me! You must—you must—you must! Or else——" Her voice broke.

"I think I understand," said Julian slowly. "It's that way, isn't it, when you're in love?"

Clementina was talking quickly, and at the same time trying to sweep the flaps of her coat about her breeched legs.

"If I can go south I can reach my sister Catherine. Yes, I know it's strange, but she will help me, although she is of the Household of the Hanoverian Princess of Wales. She'll give me shelter—she'll look after me until—until . . . until I can make up my mind what to do, until I can find a solution to all this misery. Mr. Brett, you can't say no. I promise I won't hurt the Cause. You know it is lifeblood to me, it is my self, my heart, my everything. I'd die a thousand deaths for him, a thousand deaths—save one, of poison, of repression, of assassination from that dreadful house."

"Yes," said Julian. "You force my hand, don't you? And what can I answer you?"

"I'll answer for you," said Kerr of Ferniehurst. "The pair of you had best be on horseback and away towards the south if ye hope to reach the Craggs at Otterburn before nightfall."

## CHAPTER TWELVE

## A LADY COMES TO ENGLAND

LONDON was bored, and there was no sensation to set the tongues in the coffee-houses wagging. The Whig Government talked much of prosperity and pointed to the countless refugees who had swarmed into the country from the lands of their persecution. These they declared were the chief cause of increased trade balances, but John Bull, with his insular dislike of foreigners, remained unimpressed. To his way of thinking foreigners were a mixed blessing at any time, and if the advent of these unfortunates was to mean a ceaseless increase of subsidies to impecunious princes, then it was a bad business for the inhabitants of the realm.

However, the disgraced Tory Party appeared inclined to take new heart. They were seen more often in the clubs and coffee-houses, or taking the air in St. James's. Their exile to their estates in the country, which had immediately followed the 'Forty-five, was coming to an end. Moreover, as in the interim they had been able to save considerable sums of money through an enforced avoidance of London expenses, they were now able to spend lavishly on toilettes and amusements. But despite this influx London continued to remain bored. The racing at Newmarket had been disappointing; Mr. Garrick at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, had not produced anything sensational; and Royal Hanovers' attempts at entertainment were accounted dull and dowdy affairs.

What Society wanted was something to lift it out of itself, a clandestine marriage, an elopement, a few duels, or fantastic gains or losses on the gambling tables. But none of these sensations were forthcoming, and even the wranglings of His Grace the Duke of Bedford, whereby he was either in or out with His Majesty's mistress, Lady Yarmouth, and correspondingly in or out of office, were becoming commonplace. So it was only natural that high Society looked abroad for a *divertissement* and discovered that the Whigs' much-vaunted Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was all but in the International waste-paper basket, and that King Louis XV and the Pompadour were surreptitiously favouring the Cause of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Moreover, it was an open secret that Prince Charles Edward, armed with a new fiat from his father the titular King James, had moved his shadow Court and headquarters to Flushing and was in active negotiation with the Dutch merchants for the purchase of arms.

A whisper started in the coffee-houses. Clementina Walkinshaw—yes, some of the bloods had heard of her. Surely there was a song written about her and her liaison with Prince Charles? Clementina Walkinshaw? Everybody had forgotten about her, and now her name was on everybody's lips with a piece of gossip of first magnitude. The lady had escaped from Scotland, where she had been held in a form of voluntary imprisonment. Yes, she had disguised herself as a young man—pulled on breeches and boots over feminine legs and thighs, and plaited her dark hair into a peruke. Rumour had it she had ridden hard and southwards with an unknown



cavalier, and now was suffering violently from blisters 'raised on an unmentionable part of her anatomy'. Bubb Dodington, who never lost the opportunity of turning a *bon mot* against the Kings, George and James, made a quip of it: "Uneasy lies the head that wears the Crown—but how much more uneasy lies the bottom of a Prince's Mistress?"

London laughed aloud, and even female society tittered and giggled, if a trifle coarsely, at Miss Walkinshaw's discomfort. At first the 'Broad Bottom' Administration refused to consider as a matter of interest the condition of the lady's blisters, but before long Mr. Pelham was forced to realize that he must make some enquiry into the matter before he was ordered to do so by the irate King George. Therefore the Prime Minister summoned the Earl of Cooper, the Solicitor-General, to him and discussed the Walkinshaw situation with considerable terseness.

"William," he said, "I personally think that you put too much store on this fellow Pringle. The information that you gave me about Lord Primrose does not seem to tally."

"Primrose?" said Cooper sharply, and shifted the weight of his body from one foot to the other. "I hope you will excuse me saying, sir, that I stand in a rather strange position so far as Lord Primrose is concerned. You will appreciate that I am affianced to his daughter, the Lady Angela."

"Exactly!" said Mr. Pelham. "Exactly so. And when you first mentioned this matter to me I had no objection. I feel that Primrose is more sinned against than sinning. He has a wilful wife, and that is a difficult background for any man."

"Yes, sir," agreed Cooper, and let his eyes travel slowly round the Prime Minister's room. It was a sombre chamber, of dark walnut and darker brown, with a turkey carpet of the deepest red, and morose-looking gentlemen, the predecessors, gazing down from their oil-paintings mounted in heavy gilt frames. He cleared his throat apologetically. "Pringle's information is straightforward, sir. Lord Primrose has engaged a new factor by the name of Julian Brett, who was recommended to him by the Reverend Doctor King. I have seen him myself at Primrose House."

"Another of these Jacobites?" demanded Pelham.

"Yes, unfortunately so," agreed Cooper. "If I may continue, sir——"

"Oh, go on," said Mr. Pelham, with resignation.

"It was only natural for Pringle to think that Brett would be going to the Continent. As in the case of Sharpe, he made his plans to intercept on the Dover Road. Those were your instructions, sir."

"Agreed," said Mr. Pelham. "But why did Julian Brett go to Scotland? He gave you the slip before Jedburgh, didn't he, and you didn't pick him up after that? But let's have the first question: why did he go to Scotland?"

Cooper took a shot in the dark.

"I suggest, sir, it was part of his duties to go to Moniaive and inspect Lord Primrose's Scottish estates."

"That's incorrect, and you know it, Cooper. Brett never went near Moniaive. He made for Glasgow, and there the Scots pursuivants lost track of him. They picked him up at Bannockburn, where one of our men thought he had killed him by a chance shot through his bedroom window. This

has been proved false." He took up a paper from the desk before him. "Here's a report of the Scottish Office if you'd like to see it. Edinburgh states both the east and west roads were watched. Brett must have taken the Carstairs route, which shows this fellow likes rough riding. The Scottish pursuivants followed him to Jedburgh, arrived there too late and missed him again." Pelham paused to purse his lips. "William, have you heard the rumour that Miss Clementina Walkinshaw is in England?"

"Yes, sir," said Cooper quickly. "I understand she is emulating her lover and resting at Derby."

"I see no humour in this matter," Mr. Pelham frowned. "Miss Walkinshaw would only come in to England for one reason, and that is to reach the Young Pretender, and, moreover, she could not undertake the journey without help. This fellow Julian Brett stayed at the Manor at Bannockburn, where Miss Walkinshaw was held in enforced retirement. Brett stopped there and the next thing we hear is that he and Clementina have come south. What I want you to discover, William, is whether they came together."

"Shall I arrest Brett?" asked Cooper.

Mr. Pelham banged his fist upon the desk. "Arrest him? Good heavens, no! We must have no arrests, save by order of the Court and carried out in a legal manner. There is nothing which makes an Administration more unpopular than taking the law into its own hands. Don't you realize we'd lay ourselves open to *habeas corpus* and a hundred other accusations of this sort? No, William, you must find an easier means than that."

Mr. Pelham rose to his feet. He walked slowly up and down the room, deep in thought. He halted and turned and looked searchingly at Cooper.

"I am wondering," he said slowly, "whether it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. These Stuarts and their paramours! They have never yet found a woman who did them any good. Is this Clementina Walkinshaw to be the exception?" He chuckled quietly. "The English are prigs and prudes. Perhaps Miss Walkinshaw's presence in England may be a greater embarrassment to the Jacobites than to ourselves. No, William, leave matters as they are, but watch this fellow Brett. Prince Charles won't cool his heels for ever at Flushing, and Primrose and the rest of them will have to make a move either to save their necks or lose them." He turned to look thoughtfully out of the window. "My roses are very fine, aren't they, William? The German strain are particularly nice. And, talking of roses, that reminds me of Lady Angela Primrose—so like a rose, isn't she, but remember, William, roses have thorns, even the prettiest of them." He made a sign of dismissal.

Lord Cooper bowed and, breathing an inward sigh of relief, walked quietly to the door.

Whilst Lord Cooper had been in conference at Downing Street a discussion was taking place at Primrose House. Seated round the library table were Lord Primrose, Lady Primrose, the Earl of Westmorland and the Duke

of Beaufort, whilst Doctor King, acting in the capacity of secretary, was making notes at the farther end.

"What Elibank's plan boils down to is assassination," said the Duke of Beaufort thoughtfully. "Brett reports that the Scots will come to London, steal in upon King George, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and their twelve-year-old son."

"Exactly," agreed Westmorland. "We British have always been averse to assassination or political murder. Remember, for instance, Sir John Oldcastle. That deed took place centuries ago, but the memory still sticks and stinks."

Lady Primrose interrupted, speaking quickly. "I cannot see the difference. The Whigs would kill us by means of political execution. Then why should we not retaliate by political murder? I consider that Elibank is right. If you cut off the head of the serpent its body is impotent and harmless."

Lord Primrose looked nervously towards his wife. "My dear Mary, I know we have good reason to hate the Whigs, that we should dislike the Hanovers, but all the same Elibank's idea savours more of a Medici than of a Stuart. The Prince has told us that he will return and reconquer in the name of his father. He has bought weapons and he asks that those loyal to him will do battle in the Cause. But I cannot think Prince Charles Edward Stuart would be party to a night of knives to gain a throne. What do you say, Arnold?"

Doctor King put down his quill pen. "I am not only thinking of the House of Stuart, but I am also thinking of the British people. How would they take to a King who had regained his throne by such a method?"

"Fiddlesticks!" snapped Lady Primrose. "Since when have the British people been asked what they think about their ruler?"

Beaufort sighed. "This is all very perplexing, but I feel that we make decisions which are not ours to make. Surely it is a matter for King James and Prince Charles to decide. The question should be put to them. Who are we to say 'yes' or 'no' to Elibank and the Scots?"

Westmorland rubbed his chin. "Beaufort's right. Let's send the message to the Prince at Flushing and hear what he has to say. Blood must be split, and I can't see that there's much difference whether we spill it on sheets or pavements!"

"Then shall I send Mr. Brett to Flushing?" asked Lord Primrose.

"This Mr. Brett?" said the Duke of Beaufort slowly.

"Yes, Your Grace," answered Doctor King. "I introduced him to Lord Primrose and was able to gain him his position. Is there anything else you would require of me regarding his character?"

The Duke of Beaufort glanced meaningly at Westmorland.

"I am not asking about his character. What I desire to know is whether this Mr. Brett does not take too much upon himself. By that I mean whether he has anything to do with the coming of Clementina Walkinshaw to England."

Doctor King caught his breath. "Miss Walkinshaw's coming to England," he said slowly.

"Those were my words, Doctor," said Beaufort. "I for one believe that there was a liaison between Clementina and the Prince, which did him great harm. When a woman is in love there is nothing so thoughtless and headstrong, and when a man's in love there's no creature on earth who can make a bigger fool of himself in so short a space of time. I am asking a question that must be answered. Did this fellow Brett have anything to do with Miss Walkinshaw's arrival in England?"

A silence fell. Primrose looked awkwardly about him. Doctor King was buried ostentatiously in his papers.

"Are we to believe rumour?" asked Lady Primrose quickly.

"Have we asked Brett about Miss Walkinshaw?" demanded Westmorland.

Doctor King sighed. "I can speak for Julian Brett," he said very quietly. "He did not wilfully bring Miss Walkinshaw here. He left the Manor at Bannockburn after Elibank had given him the message for us. He took the Carstairs route as he was instructed to do, and thereby was clever enough to avoid the Scots pursuivants. When he arrived at Jedburgh, Kerr of Ferniehurst was his host and introduced him to a young man whom he said wished for company on the route to London. Julian Brett only then discovered this young man was none other than Clementina Walkinshaw. He offered his escort, for there was no alternative. He rode with Miss Walkinshaw as far as Derby, and there he left her with Sir Algernon ffoulkes, who had previously arranged to accommodate her."

"We cannot blame Mr. Brett unduly," said Lady Primrose. "All the same, we do not wish the Whigs to turn the Prince's banner into a bed-sheet."

"Shall I send for Brett?" asked Lord Primrose.

The Duke of Beaufort shrugged his shoulders. "What good would it do, Arthur?"

Clementina Walkinshaw had come to England. Had she come because the Prince had told her so to do? Was the reason innocent or was the old liaison to start again? He shuddered to think what might happen to the Cause if Prince Charles should become hopelessly compromised with Clementina. The doctor was man enough of the world to realize Julian had had little alternative than to offer his escort. If he had refused to take Clementina with him she would have ridden after him and thus probably brought downfall to the pair of them. No, Julian had done the only thing, and the hand of Providence had played a part in that the blisters had risen at so propitious a moment and prevented the young woman's precipitate entry into London. Once there was a time when Doctor King had nearly broken his heart because Derby lay so far from the capital—now he was thankful for every mile of that distance.

Boulter appeared surreptitiously and approached the clergyman.

"Did you desire anything, sir?"

Doctor King smiled. "Why, Boulter, I don't think I do, save if you could tell me where is Mr. Brett?"

Boulter raised his eyebrows. "At the moment, sir, he is in the Arms Room. He told Elliott that should anybody require him he was practising with the foils."

"Good. Good. A warlike pastime, but an excellent one for any of Mr. Brett's calling."

"Indeed yes, sir," agreed Boulter. And, moving across, he opened the door which led from the Great Hall to the East Wing.

"Thank you, Boulter," said the doctor. "You almost read what is in my mind." He passed through the door and walked slowly along the stone corridor which led through the East Wing. This part of the great house had been designed at a later date than the main pile. Lord Primrose's father had always hated the London existence, as he termed it. He was a man who liked field sports, military pastimes and pursuits and, above all, the practice and use of arms. Therefore he had built the East Wing and at the end of it a large chamber which went by the name of the Arms Room. Here was collected a fine display of weapons of every sort and kind—pistols, fowling pieces, muskets, broadswords, sabres and the finest Toledo rapiers, for the late Lord Primrose had been considered one of the foremost swordsmen in the country, and without many peers in the whole of Europe.

The doctor walked slowly, his hands behind his back, and at last came to the door of the Arms Room. He pushed it open and stood contemplating the figure of Julian as he thrust and parried nimbly about a fencing sack.

Julian was stripped down to his shirt and breeches, his sleeves were rolled up and patches of sweat were showing through his shirt.

Doctor King watched the display of swordsmanship, the quick feint, the parry and the thrust and back to the point again, attack and defence and then attack.

"Ah, Julian," said the doctor. "Always the attack, always forcing the pace. I wonder you still love swords after they have caused you so much trouble."

Julian laughed. "Don't tell me, Doctor, that the pen is mightier than the sword, and then in the same breath condemn me for my bad writing."

"I wouldn't condemn you for anything," said Doctor King. "I only come to bring you news, and I rather think that you are expecting it. It's on the cards you go to the Continent."

Julian smiled eagerly. "To the Continent! To Flushing—to see the Prince?"

Doctor King nodded. "Yes," he said slowly, "but you must wait for Lord Primrose to give you your final instructions. Perhaps they will come this evening. There may be a delay until tomorrow. Your departure must be very secret."

Julian grounded his sword. "What do you think will happen, Doctor?" he asked.

"That is for the Prince to decide. He alone must weigh up the pros and cons and decide if the moment is right to strike. That is only one matter I would discuss with you. What of Miss Walkinshaw?"

Julian shrugged his shoulders. "I have told you everything, sir. She thought she was in danger of assassination. Certainly they kept her prisoner in that house. Her escape was of her own contriving—I had nothing to do with that. It was only at Jedburgh I came in contact with her. You know the rest."

"Yes, I know it. I am frightened that the Whigs will seize upon this as an opportunity to calumniate the Prince. We have put a weapon into their hands."

A silence fell between them.

"I am sorry, sir," said Julian. "But what else could I do?"

"Nothing," said Doctor King, and put his hand on Julian's shoulder. "You could do nothing save what you did." He hesitated. "But one promise I must have, a promise between you and me, Julian. If you go to Flushing—if you see the Prince, talk only of such matters as concern the military and political aspects. Swear to me that you will not mention Clementina Walkinshaw to him."

"I promise," said Julian. "On my word of honour."

The words were hardly spoken when from the direction of the Great Hall there came the sound of considerable commotion.

"Where's this fellow Brett? Where is he? Don't bandy words with me. Tell me where he is—bring him here! Brett! Brett! Come here, you damned scoundrel!" roared an angry voice.

Julian and Doctor King looked at each other. "Cooper," said the doctor. "And in a vile temper."

"What shall I do?" asked Julian quickly.

"Wait here. You'll do better to face him now."

They could hear the banging of the passage door. Lord Cooper was still shouting and bellowing for Julian Brett, and mixed with this outcry came the quieter tones of Boulter. He was pleading, trying to pacify, but without the smallest success.

"I think," whispered Doctor King, "the wine is in and the wit is out. He has taken a glass or two to reinforce his indignation."

The footsteps reached the passage outside the Arms Room, and halted.

"Come out, you damned scoundrel! You Jacobite traitor! You knave of fortune!" shouted Cooper. "Damn you, sir, wait until I get a horsewhip across your shoulders, or a hangman's rope about your neck."

The door burst open. Lord Cooper strode angrily into the room. Boulter's frightened face appeared for an instant behind him, and was gone. The butler was a man to avoid scenes, and this had the makings of an ugly affair.

"Brett," said Cooper. "Did you hear me calling you?"

Julian eyed him evenly.

"Did you hear me calling you?" repeated Lord Cooper.

Julian bowed stiffly. "I heard my name mentioned."

Doctor King tried to intervene. "I was speaking to Mr. Brett, my lord, and I did not think fit to interrupt our conversation."

"You did not think fit!" sneered Cooper. "And since when have you taken upon yourself the right to impede one of His Majesty's Ministers?"

"I did not realize the matter was official."

Cooper glowered. "A Minister is always on duty when he is dealing with men who undermine the security of the State."

Doctor King stiffened. "You use strong words, my lord. Might I

remind you that we are all guests under the roof of your prospective father-in-law?"

"Guests!" sneered Cooper. "You and I may be guests, but that honour does not extend to this conceited meddler." He turned furiously upon Julian. "You brought a lady called Clementina Walkinshaw into England. Why did you bring her, and what did you discuss during your ride?"

Julian did not answer.

"I repeat the question. What did you talk about? Did Miss Walkinshaw mention her liaison with the Young Pretender? Did she discuss any plans for meeting with him? Answer me, you blockhead! Or else . . ."

"Threats," said Julian quietly. "My lord stoops to use threats?"

Doctor King would have stepped forward, but Julian grasped hold of his arm and restrained him.

"No, sir, this is a matter between his lordship and myself. He directs his questions to me."

"Be careful, Julian, be careful," implored the doctor.

Cooper cut in savagely. "I am waiting for an answer. When you brought Miss Walkinshaw to England, what did you discuss?"

A flicker of a smile passed over Julian's face. "Miss Walkinshaw, my lord? I ask your pardon, but you speak in riddles. I gave my company to a young gentleman. His name was Clement Walker. He was somewhat effeminate, I admit, and making the journey to the south he was fearful of travelling over the Debatable Lands."

"You damned liar!" snarled Cooper.

"My lord, I am not used to being addressed in those words."

"Then you'd better become used, for I have stronger ones waiting for you. If you seek to earn your wages by bringing these Stuarts meddling again, I'll tell you, your reward will be the hangman's rope."

"As a sample of Hanoverian justice, my lord?"

Doctor King made another effort to join issue. "My lord, you forget that Mr. Brett is a servant of Lord Primrose. He must, therefore, be circum-spect in what he says."

"Hold your tongue, you old fool!" roared Cooper.

Julian blanched. "You will take back those words, sir. You can insult me, but keep your evil tongue from Doctor King. Do you hear me, sir? Take back those words."

Cooper dropped his eyes to the sword which Julian still held in his hand. "How unnatural for a yokel to arm himself with a gentleman's weapon! For that reason, no doubt, you become the braggart. Well, suppose I give you some of that medicine? Suppose I teach you that swords are for gentlemen's use and not tap-room brawlers? Are those not the words the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford used?"

"How excellently your spies inform you, my lord! Was your hireling, Pringle, responsible for this revelation?"

"Pringle?" shouted Cooper. "Pringle? Why do you use that name? Damn you, sir, be careful what you say!"

"I am being most careful, sir," retorted Julian. "It is you who are being uncivil."

"And I'll be more uncivil, you braggart. That sword you hold has a twin, and by heaven I'll use it to teach you a lesson you won't forget on this side of hell."

The sword case with the twin to the weapon which Julian held lay upon the table. Lord Cooper whipped it from the case, he swished the duelling blade menacingly through the air. Julian did not move. He waited with the point of his sword resting on the ground, his eyes fixed on his lordship.

"Gentlemen," implored Doctor King, "not here in Lord Primrose's house."

"On guard!" shouted Cooper. "On guard, you rascal! If you have the guts to guard yourself."

"You wish to fight, sir?" asked Julian.

"I wish to whip you, you upstart. As I have no whip in hand a sword will do as well. On guard, I say!"

Julian saw there was no alternative. Cooper had stripped off his coat, and as he was making ready to duel the fury of his passion had left him. He had become cold and deliberate. Even in the short time that Julian had been in London he had learnt something of Lord Cooper's prowess with the sword. Though he had taken the law as his profession, rumour had it he had already fought a dozen duels and killed at least two of his opponents. The reputation as a killer was well known in the coffee-houses and the clubs.

"Take guard!" ordered Cooper, and Doctor King, knowing that all chance of intervention was hopeless, drew away from the radius of the swords.

Cooper came forward in a rush. He struck hard, downwards, upon Julian's guard and his wrist flicked away with the blade so that it flashed within an inch of his opponent's throat.

Julian had stepped back in the nick of time. Cooper, a large muscular man, heavy-boned and powerful, was driving at him with all his force. His plan was to beat him against the wall and thereby render his agility useless. For the moment Cooper was not fighting in the approved duellist style—he did not use the point of his sword for a thrust but rather he drove hacking broadsword and trying to knock down Julian's guard. Julian gave a step before another lunge. Steel met steel with a clash and slither. For an instant the swords were locked, and with a twist of the wrist Cooper had broken free again. He cut fiercely to the body—Julian parried and caught a second stroke at the head. Against the force he had to give another step, and the wall was becoming dangerously close. Cooper was trying to outfight him, beating away towards the right, and thus turning him so that he was constantly on parry and retreat.

Doctor King watched the fight with agonized eyes. He knew what Cooper could do and would do if he had the chance. His very position would guard him against legal reprisals. If Julian was killed there would be no power to avenge him, and likewise none to punish Cooper. If the fate went the other way and Julian should kill Cooper? A verdict would be brought against him for murder, and he would surely hang as other duellists had done before. The doctor forced his attention back to the fight.



Cooper's breath was coming in short gasps. The exertion of his first attack was beginning to tell. Julian was very cool and, although Lord Cooper's thrusts were becoming more ferocious, he managed to parry each of them neatly and to keep the blade and point of the opposing sword away from his body.

"Damn you!" cursed Cooper, as another of his thrusts went wide. He lunged for the head and was foiled in a flash by Julian. He lunged again and this time in the interlock of blades his point overshot and cut the skin of Julian's right arm from wrist to elbow.

"Blood!" shouted Cooper exultantly. "First blood mine! Has the cock-sparrow had enough?"

Julian took the challenge grimly. "*A l'outrance*, my lord," he snapped, and the fight went on.

Cooper was tiring and now it was Julian who attacked. His lordship was leaving himself open, and there were faults in his guard.

Julian was not out to kill or to wound. He was playing his man as a cat does a mouse, foiling him at every thrust and tiring him to the point of exasperation.

Cooper drove a thrust at the heart, but his blade was caught and turned aside. An instant of quick and deadly wrist-work and the rasp of steel as the swords flew apart. Cooper attacked again, quickly, hoping to catch Julian on the wrong foot. He lunged low, but his thrust was beaten down and it was all he could do to keep his balance.

"Come on, my lord," challenged Julian. "Let's see some sword-play. The heart—the head—do not cut at your opponent's legs."

Cooper swore violently. "Damn you, hold your tongue or I'll cut it out!" He sprang forward in a tremendous lunge and his sword arm shot out.

Julian feinted, engaged and locked swords. Gradually Cooper's arm, tight-held with the two hilts close together, was being forced back, his wrist was all but twisted out of joint. A snap and a gasp and it was all over. His lordship's sword flew out of his hand and clattered to the floor. With a quick movement Julian put his foot upon it.

"You've had enough, my lord? Let me explain your fault. You are too impetuous, and as a swordsman you drive too hard towards the right. Play away at the left a little and overstretch your opponent."

"Damn and blast your eyes!" cursed Cooper. "You impertinent swine—to teach me—to lecture me! Give me my sword—let me get at you!" He threw himself forward, arms outstretched to grasp his fallen blade and to get back at the fight again. Julian saw what was coming and was too quick for him. He dropped his sword and, hitting out with all his force with his left fist, caught Cooper fair and square on the point of the jaw.

With a grunt and a groan his lordship collapsed in a heap, and lay gasping.

"Julian," said Doctor King. "Thank God you have not killed him, but you have done enough. What will be the end of this?"

Quick footsteps were coming down the passage. An instant and the door was thrown open. The Lady Angela, in outgoing clothes and fresh from a promenade, stood framed in the doorway.

"William! Whatever is the matter?" She swept her glance to the doctor. "Doctor King, what is this? Have they been fighting in my father's house? I heard the clash of swords. William, have they wounded you? William! Answer me."

Lord Cooper was rising with some difficulty to his feet. He was gasping for breath and he appeared to have some trouble in using his jaw.

"This swine," he said. "Angela, you should not see this. This devil that you have taken into your midst. He does not fight as a gentleman. Damme, no. But he uses his fists. I should never have trusted him with a gentleman's weapon."

His lordship came towards Angela. "You do not believe me, but I tell you the truth. Take no notice of what these fellows say. This man Brett attacked me and sought to kill me, and not content with that he punched me in the face."

Neither Julian nor Doctor King spoke. Angela looked from Cooper towards them.

"Have you nothing to say, Doctor?"

Some of Cooper's assurance was coming back to him.

"Angela, how dare you question what I have said. This fellow tried to kill me, and not content with that he struck me. This damned servant of your father's!" he sneered.

"You lie, my lord," said Doctor King quietly. "I will not pain Lady Angela with any further explanations. All I say is to repeat, you lie, my lord."

"Have you no explanation, Mr. Brett?" demanded Lady Angela. "Men do not fight without a reason."

Julian bowed stiffly. "My lady, I ask your pardon. Lord Cooper has already given his view; it is not for me to question his explanation."

"Indeed, Mr. Brett." Angela's voice cut. "Then I ask you to remember that you are a servant, and behave as such. Come, William!" She stood by the open door and waited for the discomfited Cooper to pick up and don his coat. "Come, William," she repeated.

Cooper hesitated, looked venomously at Julian and, with a shrug of his shoulders, followed her through the doorway.

Julian watched them go and methodically began to wind a handkerchief round his injured arm. The wound was no deeper than a scratch and already the blood-flow had stopped. Doctor King came to his aid.

"Praise God you did not kill him, Julian."

Julian looked at the doctor and smiled. "You are too worried for me. Cooper meant to fight and kill me. It was higher politics, and for that reason he chose to pick a quarrel. He found me here and swords were handy. Remember, Doctor, this is a fight for the sake of a King, and if we serve we must be willing to risk our lives."

"I know," said Doctor King, "but I don't want it to be your blood. You see, I brought you into all this."

Julian put a reassuring hand on the doctor's arm. "I am doing well, sir, in this new position of mine. I have brought Miss Walkinshaw to England and I have punched the Whig Solicitor-General on the chin, which, taking

into consideration the shortness of my employment, is a considerable effort on my part."

Doctor King interrupted anxiously: "I shall tell Lord and Lady Primrose of the entire circumstance and they will believe me. . . . Julian, do not worry on that account. Lord Primrose knows that I could not lie to him."

Julian shook his head. "Believe me, sir, I do not give a fig for Lord Cooper; so long as Lord Primrose wishes to employ me I shall serve him faithfully."

"What is on your mind?" asked the doctor.

Julian paused. "Her name—Angela Primrose. It is unpleasant to be reminded by her red lips that I am her father's servant, even though I do punch that oaf of a fiancé of hers on the jaw. However, this is a world of give and take. Perhaps it will be my turn to give and hers to take."

"Heaven forbid!" said Doctor King. "Julian, I implore you, do not entertain such thoughts of the Lady Angela. It is madness!"

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE DISTAFF SIDE

As Mrs. Weelands put it, there was nothing like a duel between a couple of gentlemen to upset the household. Here was a good dinner spoilt, meat roasted to a cinder, and pastry as flat as a pancake.

Boulter had explained everything as it had occurred. He had seen the arrival of Lord Cooper, he had taken care to see as much of the duel as possible, and now he was describing with a fullness of detail and great enjoyment what had happened. His audience consisted of Mrs. Weelands, the sour Spence and the buxom Evans, who had reinforced themselves with a bottle of his lordship's best Spanish wine whilst they listened. Lord Cooper was not popular in the household. He was arrogant and unpleasant with servants, and, secretly, 'below-stairs' was thoroughly pleased with what Mr. Brett had done.

"He'll get the sack," said Mrs. Weelands. "Lord Cooper will see to that."

Boulter coughed deprecatingly.

"You were going to say, Mr. Boulter?" asked Spence politely.

"What a to do!" said Boulter, casting a vicious eye at Mrs. Weelands, who was helping herself somewhat liberally from the decanter. "His lordship—that's Lord Cooper, I mean—goes straight out of the house. There was Lady Angela saying how sorry she felt, and he in such a towering rage he didn't even bid her good day. I hadn't time even to open the front door for him. He pulled it open himself and slammed it right in my face!"

"The sauce!" said Evans, "And what's going to happen next?"

"Don't ask me," said Boulter. "I'm not a prophet. But I wouldn't be surprised if Mr. Brett doesn't go out of this household a darned sight quicker than he ever came in."

Mrs. Weelands passed the bottle round again and the glasses were filled. "It's a shame," said Evans. "That's what I call it—a shame. Mr. Brett's trying to earn his living the same as all of us, and not being able to defend himself when he's set upon."

Spence sniffed and tightened her thin lips. "That's quite enough from you, Evans," she said. "And if you'd take a word of advice from someone who knows, you'll be careful of this Mr. Brett."

Evans gave a shrill peal of laughter at this warning.

"Oh, Miss Spence, you do say the funniest things! Me and Mr. Brett? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Mrs. Weelands drained the decanter into her glass. "I'm not so sure the ideas weren't there before, that was, if anybody was to ask me."

There was a knock at the door and a housemaid appeared.

"The Lady Angela wants Evans at once," she said.

Evans looked regretfully at the company and accepted the call to duty. She sighed deeply as she left the servants' hall.

A moment later there came an imperious pealing of the front-door bell, and Boulter, as Elliott was off duty, rose to answer it, first setting his coat and wig before the mirror.

Even this slight delay brought a second peal from the bell, and Boulter almost hurried as he went down the corridor from the servants' quarters to the Great Hall. An under-footman had already opened the door to a resplendent person in the livery uniform of a messenger from the Solicitor-General's office. This imposing personage bowed stiffly to the butler, opened his satchel and extracted a heavily sealed letter.

"For the Right Honourable the Earl of Primrose, from the Right Honourable the Earl of Cooper, His Majesty's Solicitor-General. I am instructed that there is no reply and therefore I bid you good day."

The personage turned and moved away, the ferrule of his long messenger's cane tapping impressively as he went down the steps.

Boulter motioned for the footman to close the doors and regarded the letter thoughtfully.

"That's it," he said to himself. "His lordship puts down the sword and takes up the pen."

He walked slowly across the hall and down the corridor towards the study. Here he paused outside the door and listened. His lordship was in conference; he could hear the higher-pitched tones of her ladyship and the deep full voice of Doctor King.

He knocked.

"Come in," ordered Lord Primrose.

Boulter entered, bowed to his lordship and placed the letter before him on the table. He made another bow, this time taking in Doctor King and Lady Primrose, and retired with measured step.

Arthur Primrose took up a paper-knife and slit the flap of the envelope.

"It's from William," he said.

"You needn't have told me that, Arthur," cut in Lady Primrose. "Moreover, in it William is demanding that we dismiss Mr. Brett immediately?"

"That is partly what he says."

"Has Cooper any other demands?" asked Doctor King.

"I will read you the last paragraph of his letter," said Lord Primrose, and cleared his throat.

*"Furthermore, I must make myself abundantly clear. It was with the approval of all concerned that I became affianced to your daughter Angela, and after what has taken place in your house today I must reiterate my position. It was only at the greatest sacrifice and at the risk of harm to my political career that I agreed to become engaged to the daughter of a family so notoriously compromised with the Tory Party and treasonable associations. I deliberated much over this, but I felt that I was right in obeying the ordinations of my heart, and at the same time, by this engagement of marriage, offering your household some protection.*

*"I now insist that Angela be informed that I am impatient for the marriage to take place, and that you give your sanction in writing that the aforesaid marriage between myself and your daughter shall take place within the space of three weeks from today.*

*"I have the honour to be, sir,*

*"Your affectionate and prospective son-in-law,  
"William."*

"So!" exclaimed Lady Primrose. "I did not think the ultimatum would have come as quickly as that."

"But what can we do?" asked Primrose. "There's a threat in every word of it. William wants his price, and Angela and the *dot* that goes with her is that price." He looked appealingly towards his wife. "We have played with fire and now our fingers are burnt. You must go to Angela at once and tell her of this letter. She is a sensible girl—she will realize what sacrifices are necessary from her, for the sake of our safety and for the Cause." He sighed deeply, and noticed apprehensively how impatient his wife had become. "Please allow me to finish, my dear. You will explain to Angela the predicament we are in. Tell her that when our plans have succeeded, and the House of Stuart is returned to the Throne, should Cooper have not been killed in the fracas, an annulment of marriage will be arranged." He paused and looked towards Doctor King. "On some pretext or other? What do you think, Arnold?"

Doctor King looked sternly across the table. "My lord, I could be no party to such a suggestion. I am a priest, and I believe the teachings of my Church and the Christian Faith. I believe marriages are made in heaven."

"But what can we do? What can we do?" muttered Primrose. "If we refuse William's demands he will act against us. How can we help King James and the Prince if we are all lodged in the Tower of London? We must sacrifice everything and anything for success."

"For success," said Lady Primrose slowly. "I wonder what that success means, Arthur. Success in restoring the Stuarts to their own or success in

saving our own skins?" She rose to her feet. "I will go to Angela and tell her what William wants. There is no alternative than she should know." She walked imperiously to the door.

Doctor King and Lord Primrose rose to their feet, and the doctor stepped across to usher her out. On the threshold she paused and looked back.

"Arthur, do not waste time in conjecture. You remember what we have said. Very well, send for Mr. Brett immediately. You had better be present, Arnold." She looked at Doctor King. "And see that what my husband says is along the lines of what we have agreed."

The door closed. Her ladyship had gone and Doctor King walked slowly back to the table.

Arthur, you will see Julian Brett now? At once?"

"I was thinking," said Primrose, "perhaps, in a moment or two. One must never be hasty over these decisions. We were somewhat hasty over Angela's engagement to William Cooper, and look where that has landed us."

Doctor King put his hand on Primrose's shoulder.

"Arthur, you have been dragged into this by your heels. Take care you are not dragged out of it by your neck. We cannot stop—that's impossible. Too much has been said, and done, and written. If we were to cease today the Whigs would only catch up with us. Cooper is only one; don't forget Newcastle, Bedford and Pelham. They have long memories and they don't forget easily. Remember that if King James returns to the throne we should make short shift of them. Whilst they hold the whip hand they'll make as short a shift of us."

His lordship was huddled in his chair and his fingers fidgeted nervously.

"Very well," he said. "Will you ask Mr. Brett to come in here?"

"Yes, Arthur."

The doctor walked to the opposite side of the room and opened a door which was almost hidden in the panelling. He passed into a little ante-room which had been turned into an office. There were ledgers on shelves along the wall, wooden deed-boxes upon the floor and maps and charts of the various properties possessed by the Primrose family. The main piece of furniture was a large desk which stood before a small window, and at this sat Julian Brett. He was supporting his forehead with his left hand and with his right wrote diligently in his diary.

"Julian," said the doctor.

Julian turned quickly in his chair. "So you've come at last," he said. "No, I have not been wasting my time, I have been writing my epitaph, the epitaph to my services with the Primrose family. Listen to this; I think you'll like it." He started to read slowly: "There once was a lovely lady who had a horse—the horse ran away and that started everything. When I first saw her she was natural and lovely, like a briar rose that peeps out of a hawthorn hedge. When I saw her again everything was different. She was powdered and painted and patched and the redness of her lips was not the redness of youth and beauty. Her lovely figure was cramped and squeezed into all sorts of funny shapes. So I knew that she played a part, that she had turned the world into a stage; she had obeyed the words of William

Shakespeare. Then I discovered another thing. This lovely lady was playing with love, she was pretending, and I was caught up in the pretence as well." He stopped reading. "It's rather nice, isn't it, sir? I mean, it grips the situation."

Doctor King shook his head emphatically. "Julian, I am frightened for you. Women are the curse of your life. I remember Mrs. Broad, at Ightham. There were other women at Oxford. Although you have said nothing and shown nothing of what is in your mind, this is the start of an infatuation. You are becoming infatuated with Lady Angela. I forbid you to think of her in that way. Lady Angela has made her views upon you quite clear. She told you that you are her father's servant. Nothing has changed your status."

Julian jumped to his feet. He was smiling at the doctor's disapproval.

"Forgive me, sir. At the moment I am his lordship's servant, but in a very few minutes from now I am certain I shall have lost that position. Once I have ceased to be his lordship's servant I am a free agent, and therefore the qualification and status between Lady Angela and myself will no longer exist. If I follow my theory of materialism, and Angela can help to turn my streets into gold, surely I have the right to use her?"

The doctor frowned angrily. "How dare you speak in this way! I will not listen to such words. Lord Primrose requires to see you immediately. He told me to bring you to him."

"I thought he had," said Julian lightly. He took up his diary, closed it and tucked it away carefully into his coat pocket. "I am ready to receive his lordship's displeasure."

"Come along, come along," said the doctor impatiently. "And don't meet your fences before you come to them."

Lord Primrose was inclined to be scathing. He dwelt for a little while upon the impolitic action on Julian's bringing Clementina Walkinshaw into England. That was, so to speak, the *hors d'œuvre* of the lecture which his lordship chose to read. Soon he came on to the question of the occurrences of that morning and of the duel with Lord Cooper. As he spoke he fingered his lordship's letter. He said that he had heard Doctor King's explanation, and under the circumstances he was willing to accept the fact that the fight had been forced upon Julian. But, all the same, he did not see why Julian had accepted the challenge. He should have realized his position and put up his sword.

"To be run through for my pains, my lord?" asked Julian quietly.

"Tut! Tut!" said Primrose. "I do not think the situation was as bad as that. However, his lordship is greatly annoyed and has written me demanding your instant dismissal."

Julian shrugged his shoulders. "Then, sir, I am dismissed. It is for Lord Cooper to command and for me to obey."

Primrose glowered; the sarcasm had struck home.

"How dare you say that, Brett?" he demanded. "At least I am master in my own household."

"Undoubtedly, sir," agreed Julian, and smiled disarmingly. "I am waiting to hear what *you* have decided, my lord." He glanced at Doctor

King out of the corner of his eye and saw a flicker of a smile on the clergyman's lips.

"Exactly," said Primrose. "Exactly; that's what I thought you would say. Well, Mr. Brett, although I deplore what has happened and dislike your headstrong manner, I think I have hit upon a solution in which I require your co-operation."

"I am your servant, sir," said Julian.

"Yes, yes. Thank you, Mr. Brett. Lord Cooper wishes to force my hand, so I, in return, will force his. Mr. Brett, listen closely to what I have to say. As I have said, Lord Cooper has demanded your dismissal. To flaunt his lordship's wishes would be dangerous."

"I see, sir," said Julian slowly. "Then the matter is at an end?"

"On the contrary," said Primrose sharply. "It is at this point that my strategy begins. From the moment you leave this room, officially you will have been dismissed from my service. There are no secrets in London, and the coffee houses and the clubs will have the story of your duel with Lord Cooper and its outcome. A scandal of this sort might suit my plans very well."

"I am glad of that, my lord."

"Lord Cooper has written his terms and I ostensibly am agreeing to them. The servants shall be informed that tomorrow morning at dawn you quit my house. When you leave here you will go to your own quarters and not attempt to mix with any members of the establishment. However, tomorrow morning you will leave for the Continent. You will proceed by horse to Dover. There you will go to the house of Samuel Thrail, a fisherman. You will make yourself known to him and show him this ring of mine." Lord Primrose pulled a drawer and took out a large signet ring, which was different from the previous one he had given Julian, and placed it upon the table before him. "On receiving this ring, Thrail will arrange your voyage to Flushing, in Holland. He is a fisherman and it is quite natural that his boat should put to sea."

"In fact, my lord, you wish me to make contact with His Royal Highness. But you are sending me with no official position, and if I am caught by the other side you can cover yourself by saying I am a dismissed servant?"

Primrose frowned. "You have a strange way of putting things. I understood when you joined the Cause you were willing to serve it, no matter what the sacrifice. Have you altered your ideas on that promise?"

"Why, no, my lord. I still serve the Cause; in fact, my lord, I have nothing else to serve save the Cause."

"Then you will go to Flushing and the Prince?" asked Primrose.

"Yes, sir."

"Good." Lord Primrose rose to his feet and paced slowly up and down the room. "Listen closely; these are your instructions——"

Before his lordship could continue there was a flurry of footsteps and the door burst open. Lady Primrose appeared, and for once her poise and tranquillity seemed to have left her.

"Whatever is the matter, Mary?" demanded Doctor King, rising to his feet and looking ponderously sympathetic.



Her ladyship ignored his enquiry. She came across to the table and confronted her husband.

"Arthur," she said. "Angela has been most rebellious and difficult. I told her that in these matters parents must decide for the best, but she will not listen. I have threatened to whip her, but even that does not deter her in the slightest. She flaunts me and says she is too old to be frightened of threats such as that. I came upon her when she was in the midst of dressing to go out. I demanded of her where she was going and she refused to tell me, and when I gave her the information conveyed in William's letter she became obstinate and obdurate."

"Oh dear," sighed Lord Primrose. "My dear, does she not understand the difficulties with which we are confronted?"

Mary Primrose cut him short. "Arthur, you must deal with your daughter. I refuse to compete with the situation any more."

From the other end of the corridor the front door slammed with considerable force.

"Oh dear, oh dear," said Lord Primrose apprehensively. "Whatever could that have been?"

Boulter appeared noiselessly in the doorway. "I am to inform your lordship that the Lady Angela has left the house."

"Is that all she said?" demanded Lady Primrose.

"Yes, my lady."

Julian and Doctor King caught each other's eye and the doctor was alarmed to see that there was a look of amusement in the former's expression.

"What do you intend to do, Arthur?" demanded Lady Primrose.

His lordship pursed his lips. "I don't think there's anything we can do. At least, not until Angela returns. And in the meantime our motto must be 'one thing at a time', my dear." He looked towards the butler. "Very good, Boulter, that will do."

Boulter bowed and, retiring, closed the door after him.

"You were saying, Arthur?" asked Lady Primrose sweetly.

"I was about to give Mr. Brett certain instructions for his forthcoming journey to the Continent. I think, my dear, we should dismiss Angela's capriciousness for the moment and deal with this more pressing matter." He smiled weakly. "Have we not always said that the Prince and the Cause must come before all other considerations?"

"Hear, hear," agreed Doctor King, with obvious relief; "let us stick to that resolution."

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### BEAUTY SPINS A WEB

WILLIAM, Earl of Cooper, sat morosely in his chambers at the Inner Temple and touched his chin delicately with the tips of his fingers. Despite the

powder and pomade, there were distinct signs of bruises together with considerable swelling.

"Are all the coffee-shops saying the same thing? Are they all talking of me and this gutter-snipe Brett?"

Jem Pringle sucked his teeth. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"If your lordship will understand, I don't have access to all the clubs, but I do hear tell a lot, and it seems to me that them Jacobites have passed the word about. You see, my lord, you're a great person, and when the likes of Julian Brett flicks your sword out of your hand and punches you in the jaw, it does give food for a little gossip, as the saying goes."

"Hold your tongue!" shouted Cooper. He sprang from his chair and began pacing up and down the perfectly furnished room. He kicked a delicately fashioned French stool angrily out of his way. He walked to the window and stood glowering out upon the sunlit scene beneath. Suddenly he turned to Pringle again.

"The Tories are spreading the scandal, are they? But who told them? How did the story leak out? Could it have been Doctor King? Was it Brett himself, or that Primrose butler?"

Jem Pringle sighed. "I don't know as any of those seems likely, and I can't imagine London listening to Julian Brett as against your lordship. Was there anybody else present, my lord, if I might ask so bold?"

"Yes," said Cooper suddenly. "Lady Angela Primrose was there. She came in and saw the end of it. I'd have given a year's income to have avoided that." His lips twisted. "But why should she scandalize me? If she hurts me she hurts herself. No, that's stuff and nonsense, Jem."

Pringle listened thoughtfully. "I've been thinking, my lord," he said quietly, "whether we shouldn't play a little faster than they do. Suppose you, as the Solicitor-General of His Majesty's Government, was to go to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, or to Mr. Pelham, or maybe to His Majesty himself? Suppose you were to say what you have in your mind about these goings-on and the Jacobites?"

"Yes?" said Cooper.

"Now to take what I'm thinking a step further, if I might make so bold. Couldn't you suggest to these right honourable gents you thought it would be as well to pop one or two of the leading Jacobites inside the Tower of London and leave them there to cool their heels for a while?"

"How dare you speak in that manner?" snapped his lordship angrily. "Are you mad? Arresting without charging? Don't you know that the most sacred of all British possessions is the law of Habeas Corpus? Hasn't it got into your numb skull that in this land of ours you can't put a man away unless you bring him to trial? You're talking *lettres de cachet*, my man, what they do in France, but what they'd never dare to do here. If I were even to put those noblemen inside the Tower of London without bringing them forth to trial, it'd cost more than my own life would be worth. Get out of my sight, and what's more don't come back again until you have the information as will bring trials and high treason against the whole bunch of

these Jacobite lords. Do you understand? Get out and be damned to you!"

Lord Cooper snatched up his golden-headed cane and swished it menacingly in the air. Jem Pringle had every reason to know what was likely to follow. Though he was the chief pursuivant of the Solicitor-General's office, he owed his position entirely to the interest of Lord Cooper. If he lost his lordship's protection, there were a dozen counts on which he might personally be taken, and any of these might carry him to the Old Bailey and thence to Tyburn Tree.

"Get out!" roared Cooper, and cut viciously at Pringle's calves. The cane connected, the pursuivant gave a yelp of pain; avoiding another cut, he scurried out of the room with the agility of a bolting rabbit.

Lord Cooper threw down his cane upon the table. He clasped his hands behind his back, cascading outwards his coat-tails, a sure sign that he was deep in thought. The superficial anger which he had displayed to Pringle had gone, and he was in a more dangerous mood.

"What was the adage?" He smiled and repeated: "'A woman—a spaniel—a walnut tree—the more you beat them the better they be.'" Yes, he thought, but the beating of Angela Primrose did not seem quite so easy. In fact, the spirit of the girl, which in the first instance he had so much admired, now almost began to alarm him. But, on the other hand, if he were to lose his Angela and to forfeit the money that went with her, the result would be disastrous. Expenses in London had been heavy for William. A political office such as that of the Solicitor-Generalship cost much to maintain. Angela was a prize which he must achieve; there was no doubt about that. And if the worst came to the worst, he had several ways of expediting matters in the way he wished. He could hang this fellow Brett on some charge or other and as a warning to others. He could threaten Lord Primrose, the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Westmorland and the others with the Tower of London. Even send them there. The iron hand in the velvet glove. That would expedite the marriage with the alluring Angela. No, there was a better idea than that.

Cooper crossed quickly to his bureau. He found notepaper and a quill pen and began to write diligently. When he had finished he carefully pounced the paper and shook it clean over a tray. He leaned back and, carefully patting his wig with the palm of his lefth and, thoughtfully read what he had written.

*My dear Prime Minister,*

*Perhaps, and before you read this, a rumour of what is supposed to have transpired at Primrose House may have reached your ears?*

*My visit to my prospective father-in-law's house was most peaceful and friendly, and for no other reason than to pay my respects upon the Lady Angela, who, as you know, is the object of my attentions. However, I was attacked and buffeted by this person called Brett, who has lately been attached to his lordship's household in some sinister situation, his introduction being through the agency of that notorious Jacobite Doctor Arnold King, which seems proof enough of his disloyalty to our Sovereign.*

*The reason of my letter to you is to ask permission that this person Julian Brett should be immediately seized and held for questioning. And, as I have reason to believe that he is concerned with several treasons, that his arrest should not be made in the usual formula of application for a warrant to a magistrate. I ask to be allowed to waive in this instance Habeas Corpus and effect Brett's apprehending in the most secret manner.*

*I trust, sir, that my intended action concurs with your views on the liberty of the subject, and ask to be favoured with your early reply.*

*I have the honour to be, my dear sir,*

*Your faithful servant,*

*Cooper.*

His lordship carefully folded the letter and tied it with red ribbon, which he waxed and sealed. He took up a small silver hand-bell and rang it. A moment later, with a shuffle of feet the door opened to admit Thomas Johnson, his lordship's clerk.

"Take this to Whitehall," Cooper ordered. "No, don't wait on a reply, that'll come in good time. Afterwards you will go to Sir Guy Stanley at his house, or if he is not there seek for him at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Tell him I wish to sup with him tonight, and he can name the rendezvous."

"Very good, my lord." The clerk reached out and took the letter, and moved with crabwise gait to the door. He held the missive pressed closely to his chest and gave a little bobbing bow.

"Very good, my lord," he repeated, and closed the door silently after him.

Once out of the presence, Johnson's tension relaxed a little. His gait briskened and he moved down the corridor to his room, where he donned his seedy black tricorn and coat.

"A letter for the Prime Minister. Tee-hee," he said suddenly to himself, ending his observation in an incongruous chuckle. He made his way quickly out of the room, down the staircase and out into the quadrangle. Here he stood blinking for a moment in the glare of unaccustomed daylight and set his course past the Temple Church and beneath Mitre Court into Fleet Street.

Johnson was one of those strange creatures whose entire life appeared to be spent amidst the dust and must of legal documents. He had served Lord Cooper many years, and as a barrister's clerk he had followed his patron's fortunes through all their phases. He had come to him when, fresh from the University of Cambridge, his lordship had eaten his dinners and become a stuff-gownsmen. He had watched his earlier endeavours at the Bar, and seen how merchant and City interests brought his master gradually to the notice of Whig politicians.

The clerk had seen this progress step by step, and in the manner of his kind he treated the relationship in terms of partnership. A few briefs from the Treasury had come their way, and Lord Cooper had acquitted himself with moderate skill. Influence had led to the Treasury Bench, which had been promotion and better briefs. Unexpectedly had come this last and recent promotion. Was not his master and patron Solicitor General, one of His Majesty's Law officers with a seat on the Government Bench in the House

of Lords? Johnson felt that he had picked his man with some discernment. He had devilled, been cursed and eked out an existence on miserable fees with an eye to greater reward. A life of briefs, indictments, affidavits and judgments and all the jargon of the legal profession, but what did that matter? The reward, the great reward, was at hand, so very near at hand. Lord Cooper might become Attorney-General, and the Woolsack might even be within his grasp.

"Great reward!" Johnson poked his long, scraggy neck out of his dingy black coat. He lifted the side of his dirty white wig, which contained a great deal more than horse-hair and potato flour, and scratched his head with rheumatically fingers. He cast his eyes upward and lovingly at Temple Bar and sighed.

"Great reward!" he muttered again.

There were only a couple of heads, carefully pickled to keep the birds from pecking them, and a severed leg. But years of wind, rain, sun and weather had made their mark, and the heads were not much better than skulls and the severed leg a ramshackle of whitened bones and stringy tendons.

"*Totus mundus agit histrionem*," he murmured, his eyes fixed upon those emblems of justice on their rusty pikes. Yes . . . yes, it was a pity high treason was on the down grade. Five-year-old skulls still spiked on the Temple Bar! What a business! What a state of affairs! When would the lawyers and the hangman get to work again?

"Tee-hee!" The clerk repeated his strange sighing chuckle. Treason was just the thing to fill the pockets of the Solicitor-General, and for that matter his own. Law officers flourished on State trials. A nice handful of arraignments of rebel peers before the bar of the House of Lords would suit most excellently. Briefs to prepare, refreshers, appeals, indictments, there would be money in plenty in that. And a few Knights Bachelor and Baronets, with good broad acres to escheat, to be brought to trial at the Old Bailey. The Tower of London full, the Fleet Prison running over and Newgate brimming over. That would be a pleasant picture. A very profitable and pleasant picture such as the new-fangled artist, Mr. William Hogarth, knew well how to depict.

Johnson chuckled to himself over this pleasant vista. Something was in the wind, things were stirring. His lordship's engagement to the Jacobite Lady Angela Primrose? The motive of that he couldn't fathom, but his master had a nose for money, as the saying was. He started to walk along the Strand, leaving Temple Bar behind him, and turned the question of this forthcoming marriage over in his mind. The rumour was that old Primrose and his haughty wife were up to their eyes in Jacobite treason, and a lot of lords, prelates and gentry were in the swim with them. Suppose the Lord Primrose was to lose his narrow head? What could be better? For all property would go to the Lady Angela, and no Whig administration could escheat the wife of their Solicitor-General.

The musty Johnson sighed contentedly. Looking at all angles, he could see nothing but personal gain, and matters were moving faster every moment. Lord Cooper had come ranting into his chambers with a great bruise on his

jaw and a temper viler than Old Nick himself. Phillips, his lordship's valet, and Mrs. Brough, the cook-woman, had let drop the information over a decanter of his lordship's finest port, and they had told a fine tale of how the master had been caught a crack on the jaw by some Jacobite upstart. Johnson approved of this scandalous happening, for what was better than a punch on the jaw to spur a man into vindictive action? His lordship would not mince matters, he was sure of that.

"And their reward shall be great," chuckled the clerk, as his feet went slithering and sliding over the heaps of garbage which the careless Londoners had flung into the street. His shoes were full of holes and some of the slime seeped into them, but he did not mind. He turned his eyes to the left and took in the fine edifice of Primrose House, standing imposingly on Essex Street, its outbuildings and stables almost abutting on to the Strand, and its fine gardens terracing down to the River Thames.

"Essex Street!" Johnson grinned. Another earl—the Earl of Essex—had gone the way of all traitors, and he had thought his head too high to fall. With Lord Cooper as the new master of Primrose House, what could be better? Perhaps there would be a pleasant lodging set aside for his trusty clerk? Who knew what Fate might bring? Who knew?

The clerk of His Majesty's Solicitor-General became even more peculiar in his movements. His head remained resolutely turned to the south, where his eyes continued to contemplate the pile of Primrose House, and his legs, animated by the effect of these pleasurable considerations, increased their pace towards the west. Before he could stop himself he collided violently with a Billingsgate fishwife, who was coming ponderously in the opposite direction.

The fishwife's language was as violent as it was illuminating, and the fact that the collision had upset her cran and sent a cascade of fish spraying all over the street increased her fury. Already the hour was late, business had been bad and through this jay-walking all chance of a financial recoup had been torn from her. She was a big woman, heavy armed and deep chested, and she had little fear of this wizened male who had caused her discomfiture. She stopped her swearing for an instant to land the astonished Johnson a box on the ears which made his teeth rattle. She swept to the attack again and delivered another well-aimed blow which cut short his squeal of protests.

Johnson gaped, bellowed and ran for his life, and hard on his heels sped the infuriated fishwife. But the contest was unequal; the clerk, despite his years, was lean and agile, whilst the fishwife was massive and short of breath. For a little while she pursued him, hurling a stream of invective, which further shortened her breath, and then gave up the chase, shaking her fist furiously and swearing she'd skin him like an eel if she clapped hands upon him. But the terrified Johnson was well out of her reach and going hard, so the fishwife returned to try and retrieve her slithery wares from the garbage of the street sewer. She picked them up one by one, wiping the bits of offal which stuck to their scales with a convenient cabbage leaf and flinging them back into the cran. As she delved, her eyes lighted upon a letter neatly tied with ribbon and sealed, but, as she could not read, the find was of no interest to

her. However, paper was always an asset and the ribbon might have its uses. She threw the letter in on top of the salvaged fish, re-hoisted the cran upon her shoulders and, still swearing under her breath, plodded off eastwards towards Billingsgate.

Doctor King had come to take his dinner with Julian Brett. They had dined in Julian's quarters at the back of the house, which was all in keeping with Julian's official disgrace in the Primrose *ménage*. The supper had been good, in fact the very same as had been sent to the Primrose table, and they had been waited upon by Elliott, the under butler. Now the last of the dishes were cleared away and the two men sat over their port.

"You say all London is laughing at Lord Cooper? The story has reached the coffee-houses and the clubs? How can that be?" Julian sipped from his glass. "Why, sir, who can have spread the tale about? Surely Cooper would not tell such a thing against himself? I have not left this house; neither have you. Would Lord or Lady Primrose spread such an unfortunate happening?"

"I cannot think who has done this," Doctor King sighed. "If only the matter could have been hushed up!"

"Why?" demanded Julian. "Lord Cooper makes a cad of himself; he lays himself open to a blow and gets one." He came back to the original question. "Could the servants have spoken against Cooper, sir?"

"Heaven forbid!" declared the doctor emphatically. "I can assure you of that; each one of them knows the slightest indiscretion could be the undoing of their beloved master and mistress."

"Then who has started this *gaffe*? Doctor, the time is too short unless the story was purposely planted. Who could have intended to do Cooper this harm, whose word would be accepted?"

Doctor King nodded his head and reached for the decanter. "You think the same as I do. If you wish to pluck the fruit you don't tickle up the wasps' nest which lies beneath."

"That's logic," Julian looked quickly at Doctor King. "Elliott tells me that the Lady Angela has been out the entire afternoon. Lady Primrose was vexed with her because she pleaded to be excused from supper, saying she was too tired to make the toilet which Lady Primrose requires of her."

"Why did Elliott tell you this?" asked the doctor, and frowned.

"Heaven knows! He helped me pack my saddle-bags for tomorrow. Perhaps he chose a subject he felt would interest me."

Julian's tone was disarmingly light, but Doctor King saw through the banter. "Yes, Julian, Lady Angela has been round and about," he admitted. "She went to William Hogarth's studio in Leicester Fields. He was holding a viewing of the new painting he has made of Bette Hilton. Plenty of Society were there and all eager to hear a good story. Later she visited Lady Westmorland and the Duchess of Beaufort, and they'll strain their ears to catch anything against Cooper. The Ladies Carey and Haggerston were with the Duchess, and they are fine ones to carry on a gossip. How do I know all this? Listen, Julian, Boulter is my informant. This afternoon, when Lady Angela did not come back, Lady Primrose sent for Evans. The

girl refused to say anything of her young mistress, so her ladyship lost patience with her and whipped her soundly for her pains."

"Poor Evans; did the whipping make her tell?"

"Not a word, but Angela found her blubbering and had the facts from her. What does she do but sweep right in upon her mother, all flame and fury, and admit everything. Yes, and she laughed herself nearly hysterical at what she had done."

Julian raised his glass. "Here's a health to Lady Angela and her fine spirit."

Doctor King took no notice of the toast. "The fat is in the fire with a vengeance. Angela is confined to her room whilst her mother decides what she will do with her."

"So I am not the only one confined to my quarters because of the Earl of Cooper?"

"Damn!" swore Doctor King, with complete disregard to his cloth. "Damn, I told them that they played with fire."

The doctor pushed back his chair and rose from the table. He started to pace nervously up and down the room, thumping one hand upon the palm of the other, and Julian knew these signs of agitation well enough. He made his voice sound purposely light.

Julian reached forward, took up the decanter and filled the doctor's glass. "Come, sir, sit down and have a nightcap. You'll sleep better for it."

Doctor King came unwillingly back to the table. He sipped a little wine and, reaching out, snuffed a guttering candle. "Julian, we must use speed. Everything depends on the quickness of our action. Angela is the bait and Cooper's nicely hooked, but we must gaff him before he breaks loose. Once he marries Angela the tables are turned against us. Once she refuses him we're in as bad a situation. If she delays we're as badly placed again."

"Agreed," said Julian slowly. "But why does Lady Angela go to such pains to spread a scandal and slander against her official fiancé? Why does she make London laugh at his expense and pay so nice a compliment to me?"

Doctor King gasped. "A compliment to you, Julian? Whoever heard such rubbish?"

Julian rested his elbows upon the table edge. "Why, it's logic. There were two men in this fracas . . . myself and Lord Cooper. If Angela heaps ridicule on Cooper's head she obviously pays a compliment to me. I admit it's nicely veiled, but I see it all the same——"

The doctor cut in. "Since when have you called her Angela?" he demanded.

"In my dreams, sir. Dreams know no class distinctions. Since when? Why, from the first moment I dreamed about her."

"That fatal attraction, Julian? You and your women, or is it your women and you?" Doctor King sighed. He became brusque and business-like. "You have your instructions and have learnt them by heart? You know the password? Good. Money? A good pair of pistols? Everything?" He rose and Julian crossed to stand beside him.



"You won't let Lady Angela marry Cooper before I come back?" he asked, and saw the expression on the doctor's face. "I am sorry, sir. The Cause comes first. I know that . . . first of all is the Cause."

Julian smiled, he stepped back, his hand on his hips and his eyes fixed upon the doctor.

"See and behold a courier, a politician, an ambassador, an adventurer . . . and maybe a traitor all rolled into one. His name is Brett, sir, Julian Brett. Moreover, he leaves at dawn upon this great adventure. Wish him God's speed, sir, for, 'struth, I think he'll need it."

"Good fortune, Julian. Yes, with all my heart, I wish you God's speed."

The door opened and closed again. Doctor King went out so quickly and quietly Julian hardly realized he had gone. A moment later there was a surreptitious knock and Elliott came quietly into the room. He asked permission to clear away, remarking plaintively the hour was late and he wished to retire to bed. Julian gave him leave and left the sitting-room to pass through into the bedroom of his quarters. Here he stood looking at his equipment for the morrow. The saddle-bags were tight-crammed with a change of underclothing, socks, cravats, shaving-tackle, pistol-balls, powder, wads, a pistol ramrod, a muffler for the sea crossing and a spare pair of gloves. Was there anything else? Money? He put his hand into his trousers pocket and pulled out a pigskin purse. He untied the necklace and poured a heap of golden coins into the palm of his hand. One hundred guineas—he counted the money carefully. Lord Primrose and his fellow Jacobites did not mean to stint the Cause. "Good night, Mr. Brett," called Elliott from the next room, and picking up the tray he went quietly out into the passage.

Primrose House was silent. Julian strained his ears and could hear no sound. From outside he caught the heavy steps of the watch going his way up Essex Street and thumping his staff methodically on the cobbles.

The clock of a nearby church began to strike, and others joined in the chiming. Eleven o'clock. The watchman raised his voice and gave his reassuring call. "All's well. A fine night—a bright night and all's well."

A fine night . . . a bright night and all was well? Julian looked at his bed. Reason said he must sleep. He had an early start and an arduous time ahead. He yawned, shook his head and stepped across to the window. He pulled back the curtains and looked out. The watchman was certainly right, for the night was perfect, the sky a maze of brilliant twinkling stars, and not a cloud to hamper their light. He put his hand to his temples. A slight headache? Could the port have caused this? More probably the fact that he had been cooped up in his quarters and denied fresh air. Suppose he was to slip down through the side entrance and take a turn about the Primrose Gardens? Would that be breaking the rules and parole which were imposed upon him? Anyway, who was likely to see or recognize a 'disgraced' agent at this hour or night?

Five minutes of good fresh air would be worth a fortune. Elliott had

snuffed the candles in the day-room, but there was light enough from the bedroom for him to see his way, and the positions of the furniture were familiar enough. He crossed to the passage door, opened it slightly and stood listening. All was quiet and the passage night-light flickered, giving a fitful gleam. He passed through the doorway and into the passage. The head of the annexe staircase was just ahead and he grasped the banisters. Beneath all was very black, but he knew his way from experience, and feeling the stairs with his toes he went swiftly down. He arrived at the bottom, unlocked the side door and stepped out into the garden.

For a moment he stood listening and drinking-in the fresh night air. He stepped forward and his feet pressed upon the dew-sodden turf. After a score of paces he stopped to look back. Primrose House was as dark and as silent as the grave. No, not so dark. Away to the right of him, and round the corner of the mansion itself, he could see a loom of light. He walked forward, rounding the corner of the house, and wondering what might be its origin. Not the servants, for they slept in another quarter, and the same went for Doctor King. Lord and Lady Primrose had a suite on the right-hand side of the portico. The search was narrowing, and he rather enjoyed this process of deduction.

There, right above him, was the long french window from which a chink of light like a yellow spear gleamed from behind a carelessly drawn curtain. The process of deduction was complete. This was Lady Angela's bedroom, and from circumstantial evidence she was not yet asleep.

The window opened out on to a balcony of wrought iron, which was not more than sixteen feet above the ground. Moreover, a great stalk of Virgin's Bower wound its way up the wall and fastened itself upon the balustrade. Virgin's Bower! The name for the creeper seemed most appropriate.

What next? Julian wondered. Tomorrow he would have gone, but tonight there were so many questions he would like to ask. Suppose he were to throw caution to the winds? The creeper was strong. It did not break or crack under his weight. He pulled himself up on his arms and found a foothold. He reached up again and repeated the operation. Within half a minute he was on the edge of the balustrade; he grasped the rails and dropped lightly on to the balcony.

The night breeze rustled the curtains and made the vent a little larger. Julian was able to peer in. The scene was certainly a pleasant one. Angela was sitting before her mirror and carefully brushing the remnants of powder from her hair. She was in a lace *négligée*, much frilled and decorated with a myriad of little rose-pink bows. On a chair beside the dressing-table lay the dress which she had recently taken off, and beside it was a galaxy of feminine garments: stockings, petticoats, a bodice, shift and stays. She looked younger than he had previously imagined, a girl with a thoughtful and troubled forehead who brushed her hair in front of her mirror. What was he to do? He could not stand there all night, and if he was to descend the chances were he'd not manage so quietly. Besides, he wanted to speak to Lady Angela; there were those hundred questions. This was madness. He courted disaster, but he felt he must go on. What was it the Roman gladiators said? '*Moriturus esse te salutat*', and the Vestal Virgins decided

their fate. Suppose he was to speak to her and tell her of his presence? No, that would be too dangerous, for at the sound of a man's voice she would cry out and give alarm.

Another rustle of the night breeze stirred the curtains and this time the cold current of air swept into the room, for he saw the flutter of her *négligée*, and that Angela huddled its folds more closely round her throat. She rose to her feet; the window was open and she would shut it, but also before doing this she would set the curtains properly. Her hand stretched out, and it seemed she had made up her mind to look out at the night. This change of plan came too quickly for Julian to anticipate. In an instant the curtain was drawn back and he saw that Lady Angela, with a startled expression, was looking directly into his face. She gave a stifled scream and stepped back, forgetting the latch and thrusting the back of her hand to her lips. Julian realized that he must act quickly or she would raise the house. She must understand that he had no evil intent. Not realizing what he did, he stepped through the open french window and into the bed-chamber.

"Get out!" ordered Angela, her voice tense. "Get out of here—at once! Go away!"

"I mean no harm," implored Julian. "My lady, hear me, I mean no harm. I only came—oh, it was madness! The stupidity of life. I wanted to see you just once before I go."

"Get out of here!" ordered Angela. "Mr. Brett, do you realize what you are doing? Leave me at once, I order you!"

"You will not hear me—listen to what I have to say?"

Her voice cut across his pleading. "There is nothing you can say to me here and now. There is nothing I would wish to hear from you. Go immediately!"

In that same instant there came from outside a knocking on the door.

"Angela!" called the voice of Lord Primrose. "Are you there? What's the matter, my dear? Why did you cry out? Why is your light not out? Why are you not in bed?"

With a quick and desperate gesture Angela signed to Julian to draw back on to the balcony.

"Hide!" she whispered, "and for mercy's sake keep still!" She pushed the french windows together and settled the curtains. She took up a candle and placed it beside the bed and ruffled the bedclothes to make believe that she had lain there. Then she went to the door, pulled the latch and opened it in time to calm her father's impatient expostulations.

Lord Primrose, a somewhat strange sight in night-shift and bed-cap, stood hesitatingly in the doorway. He carried in his right hand a large brass candlestick, which probably he proposed to use as a weapon should the occasion have arisen.

"Why, Angela, what is all this?" he said.

She smiled at him, her lips tremulous. "Nothing, Father, nothing." She swept a tired hand across her forehead. "I started to read, perhaps I dropped off to sleep, and a nightmare came upon me." She looked vaguely at him. Bette Hilton's training in the dramatic art had not been in vain.

"Yes," she said quickly, "I remember it now. I had fallen from Champion right in the wake of a galloping regiment and as I lay there a thousand horses were about to gallop over me."

"What did you have for supper, my dear?" said Lord Primrose coldly. "If you have eaten cheese, then there is the explanation. Anyway," he said crossly, "you have disturbed your mother and me from our night's rest. All because you selfishly chose to sup alone and therefore gobbled your food, ruining your digestion." He looked acidly at her. "I shall say more of this in the morning. Good night!" The door slammed and Lord Primrose had gone.

Angela stepped back into the centre of the room and slowly turned her head towards the french windows. She made no move to go towards them, but waited, her lips a little parted. Very gently the two sides of the window were pushed open. Julian stood on the threshold and saw Angela's finger go in caution to her lips.

"You would speak to me, Mr. Brett?" she said. "Then let it be the merest whisper. You tell me that you mean me no wrong; I take your word on that. Why have you come here?"

Julian hesitated. "My lady, it was foolish, it was madness, and the stars were in the sky, and because I was apprehensive of what lies ahead of me I walked abroad, and then—well, strange thoughts came into my mind."

Angela wrinkled her nose. "Stuff and nonsense! I thought you'd have a better excuse than that."

"As a matter of fact," said Julian, "I have. And since you see no poetry in the situation, I'll ask you a question frankly."

"Which is?" asked Angela in a whisper.

"Lord Cooper?"

"Why should we speak of him?" Angela frowned.

"Because," said Julian slowly, "this morning he and I had a *contretemps*, and you coming upon us saw what had happened. Rightly, my lady, you put me in my place. That was what I expected."

Angela shrugged her shoulders. "If it was what you expected, Mr. Brett, then there is no question for you to ask."

"But," continued Julian, "there still remains another question. All the clubs are talking of this duel. I am informed it is the laugh of the coffee-houses, yet how was the scandal spread? Doctor King assures me only one person did leave this house, and she made a tour of London, calling upon her friends, attending a gathering and returning late." He looked sharply at her. "Angela, why did you spread this rumour against Cooper? Why have you paid me the compliment of telling all London of what I did?"

Her expression hardened. "How dare you call me Angela? What right have you to come here and question me? How dare you break into my room, to compromise me in this manner? Why should I not raise the alarm, bring in my father's servants and have you horsewhipped?"

"There is no reason in the world," he said slowly. "You would be within your rights. I have no power to ask you anything. All I have come to do is to offer you my adoration and my help."

"Your adoration and your help? So Mr. Brett is turned Sir Galahad? What could you do to help me? And why do I need help?"

"Because," said Julian, "if you do not watch carefully you will find yourself married, willy-nilly, to the man you despise and detest. Do you not realize that the whole hope of your deliverance from your engagement lies on the tender thread of what I may or may not accomplish on the Continent? Only if the Stuarts return will you be safe."

"How do you mean?" asked Angela sharply.

"Why, can you not see? If your father wishes to keep his head on his shoulders, he will pay you as forfeit. Cooper looks beyond your charms, he wants your broad acres as well, the Primrose patronage—everything. Please listen to me! Flesh and blood and the warmth of love lives above the battles for crowns. God knows I am loyal enough to the Stuart Cause; they pay me for what I do, and no other Cause would pay me half as well. But for you, Lady Angela, the situation is different. You have everything to lose, for you have everything with which fortune can endow a human being. Cooper saw this when he made his proposition. Now he waits to sweep the pool, to take everything, and you are only a part of the prize he expects."

Angela caught her breath, and her lips were trembling. "But why have you come to tell me this? Why should it be you, Julian Brett? At this moment, in my room, and on the eve of your departure? What is your object of this warning? You turn my blood to water, you terrify me with an awful prospect, but what can you do to save me from this fate? I have thought and schemed and worried enough, but my parents will not listen to me. They are so wrapped up in ideas of ultimate success and return of the Stuarts that they can see no other alternatives. They think they play the cleverer game, and that Cooper does not see through it. Yet what can I do? One false move and my father will go to the Tower of London, and precedent has taught me that once a Jacobite goes inside those grim walls he never comes out, save for trial at Westminster, and a last and dreary march up Tower Hill. Mr. Brett—Julian—you have brought with you all the terrors of the night, but is there no grey streak of hope to herald the dawn? You said you came here out of adoration for me. What is the extent of this adoration? Would you assassinate this fellow Cooper if I were to bid you do so? Would you pistol him, poison him, or drive a dagger between his ribs?"

Julian shook his head emphatically. "No, Angela, Cooper's assassination would not save your father's head, though it might save you."

"Then what plan have you?" she asked quickly.

"Compromise," he said quietly. "Do you know what compromise means? Do you understand? Suppose, Angela, you had one card to play, one last card that would save you, what price would you pay to hold that card?"

"Why, everything, Julian; but what is this master card I can play?"

"You told me that I was going on a journey from which I might not return—or did I say that to you? Anyway, we both agreed on the danger of this

mission of mine. Please listen to my plan. Suppose you were to go to Cooper when the last moment had arrived, when he demands his pound of flesh, and tell him that you belong to another man? Suppose you were so to play upon his pride as to declare that not only were you compromised but also you believe you are with child?"

"With child?" she gasped. "You do not mince words, Julian!"

"I do not intend to; this is no moment to pick and choose polite conversation. If you should say this to Cooper you'd gain a longer period in which to work out an escape. He would be forced to wait to discover whether what you said was true or not. The doctors and physicians would stand by your assertion and for the rest time alone could prove. The vanity of Lord Cooper would never allow him to be the father of another man's child, especially if that child was sired by a person who had punched him upon his noble jaw."

Angela turned her eyes to look frankly at him. "Julian," she protested, "there never was a stranger courtship between man and woman. Tell me, why have you said all this? Is it some awful jest? Do you take me for a wanton because of my powder, paint and patches? Those enormities that the fashion and my parents force me to wear? Why, Julian, have you said this to me?" She had grown impetuous. She was anxious, animated, and eager to have his answer.

"Because when I first saw the haughty Lady Angela Primrose I looked through the maze of fashion and discovered the same girl I met that morning in the Strand. Do you remember, Angela? With your horse Champion, and what a miss you were! How I have longed to find you again in that simple guise, and at last I have found you so. When I left my room tonight my intention was to take the air, but the Fates played a hand, as they will always do with human hearts. They brought me here to this clandestine meeting and I have found again the girl of the Strand. She is here before me, and I see and love her."

"Are you sure you love me?" asked Angela a little tremulously. "This is not a world of moonbeams and make-believe?"

"My dear, so sure I'd readily suffer the agonies of hell to spare you a sigh or one single tear. How can I prove my love for you? What words can tell the feelings of my heart?"

"Now I understand, Julian. I, too, believe the Fates have willed this for you and me. From the first moment I saw you—a young man with a foolish hat. Yes, I fought against a madness that was no madness. For in that instant my heart told me I was made for you."

He took her in his arms, and she came eagerly to him. She turned up her face and her eyes were bright as stars. "What is love?" she whispered. "What is this love? When love is real, there is no fear. Julian, I have no fear. Take me—I have no fear."

The night wind rustled in the trees, set the branches sighing and the leaves rustling. The curtains billowed and the candle which stood upon the dressing-table guttered and went out. Its lonely mate on the bedside table flickered valiantly to withstand the boisterous current of air, but it too gave up the contest, and the room was plunged in darkness.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## THE DOVER ROAD

LORD PRIMROSE had an eye for geography; he felt in questions of international politics the geographically obvious was invariably dangerous. Therefore, when he had given his instructions to Julian Brett he had told him to ride to Dover by the Maidstone road and avoid the more usual route by Sittingbourne and Canterbury. His orders were to make for Maidstone, proceed to Charing through Ashford and, turning short of Hythe, for Folkestone and on to Dover.

Julian had obeyed his lordship's wishes to the letter, and by noon he was well out upon the Maidstone road and cantering easily towards the outskirts of Lenham. That was pretty good going, and he leant forward and patted Champion's arching neck.

"Well, done, old boy," he said. "Well done! Keep on like that and we'll have an hour to spare." He slackened rein as they started up an incline. The day was becoming hot and the shade of the trees which lined each side was a pleasant respite. Julian had started at seven o'clock and the journey out of London had been entirely without incident. True, he had seen a Dragoon or two on the road, but they had taken no notice of him. They had sat stoically on their horses, or continued upon their patrols.

Nevertheless, Julian was in no way sure all danger had passed. Dragoons were a striking force to be used when necessary. The pursuivants were the fellows who carried the orders, and as like as not they would be waiting for him nearer the coast. He felt his pistol holsters and saw to it that the weapons would easily pull clear. He glanced towards Champion's ears, saw that the flies were troubling him and idly started to fan them away with his hat.

"Poor old Champion!" That had been Angela's last gift to him. She had insisted that he should ride her horse, for he was stronger and better than any other animal in the Primrose stables. She had sent a note written in her own hand to Gunn, the stud groom, who fortunately had neither the wit nor the interest to enquire how Mr. Brett could have come by such a written instruction at so early an hour. Julian, in a flush of adoration and with his heart almost bursting with love, had realized that Angela, despite their compact, was making some effort to assure he should have every chance on his journey.

Julian did not fear for himself; his thoughts rested with Angela. They had discussed the strategy she would use to outwit Cooper. She would be brazen, she would make an open declaration of what had happened. She would make it obvious to him that should he insist upon his bargain he would do it only at the price of dragging all in the mud.

What came after that? Here Julian found himself at a loss for a solution. He adored and worshipped Angela. By the troth that they had plighted and by the possession that was his, his love for her was sealed and composite. But what would the Primroses say to this? Would they ever

allow a feckless adventurer to aspire to the hand of their only child? They could elope, a clandestine marriage—but would that be accepted? Could they ever be forgiven and allowed to come together? Was Angela to be robbed of her patrimony, and of the luxury she deserved as her right, because of him?

There was a sickening thud as of some missile travelling at great speed and meeting with a solid body. Champion gave a sudden lurch and shuddered, and in the same instant there was the sharp explosion of a discharged musket. Julian pulled at the reins.

"Champion!" he shouted. "Champion! On your feet, lad. On your feet!"

The great horse made a desperate effort to raise his head. Blood was streaming over Julian's breeches and boots; the horse was hard hit and nothing could save him. Julian grabbed his pistols, pulled them clear of the holsters and kicked his feet out of the stirrups. Champion, with a groan, fell sideways upon his shoulder. He shuddered and lay still.

Fortunately for Julian, his presence of mind allowed him to throw himself clear of the stricken horse, and he landed in the ditch at the side of the road. This was dry but full of brambles, which tore and lacerated his hands and face. This was no moment to think of such petty wounds; another musket was discharged and a third; this time the bullet from one had landed with a crack against the tree-trunk not two feet above his head.

"Poor old Champion!" He was dead all right. The ball had taken him fair and square in the heart: a chance shot but a good one. That proved that the attackers lay ahead.

"They'll be after me in a moment," thought Julian. He had his pistols, enough ball and ammunition to recharge them half a dozen times, the hundred guineas were in his pocket, but his clothes and other necessities were in the saddle-bags, still fastened to the slaughtered Champion. Angela's Champion! He checked himself. This was no moment for sentiment. He was out upon Stuart business, and his duty was to get through to Flushing. Flushing lay in the Netherlands, and on the other side of the Channel, and here was he in the midst of a Kentish lane, miles from the seaboard, without a horse and faced by an ambush of unknown strength. One thing was quite certain: he could not fight it out.

The ambushers had broken cover and were now coming slowly down the road. Right and left were two Dragoons, their carbines across their arms, and in the centre of them was a man in civilian clothes, who appeared to be their superior. But as there were some eighty paces between them and where Julian lay, recognition was difficult. The three men came onwards, laughing and joking together, and at fifty paces Julian recognized who the civilian was.

"Jem Pringle!" he muttered between his teeth. Pringle was issuing a mass of orders, of what the Dragoons should do, but they appeared to think it was Pringle's job to do the hunting. They came to the side of Champion and gazed down at the horse's body.

"He be dead all right," said one of the Dragoons.

The other Dragoon grunted. "Aye. I don't like seeing good horses



killed." He looked almost savagely at Pringle. "Why didn't you let us do what I said—fetch him off with a rope and keep the horse alive? This beast would have made twenty of the nag I'm riding."

"A dangerous fellow, and we must take no chances with him. Now here you, Tom, and you, Phil, get you into that hedge and thicket. Fetch him out as a terrier would bolt a fox."

"And what'll you be doing, Mr. Pringle?" asked Phil.

"I shall be directing operations," said Pringle caustically.

"Why not direct it from the front for a change?" demanded Tom.

"We must take him alive," said Pringle. "His lordship's made up his mind that somebody's going to hang for this, and I would sooner it were Julian Brett than any of us three." There was a sly viciousness in Pringle's tone. "Phil and Tom, don't you forget we saw him pluck his pistols out of those holsters. There are two lead balls awaiting if you're careless and let him get a shot in."

Julian had heard enough. The ditch was broad and deep. But there was a hedge at the other side, and through it a sheep had recently forced a passage. Julian started to worm forward, keeping close to the ground and being careful to disturb as little foliage as possible. The going was not too difficult and the ditch was dry. He reached the hole in the hedge and looked cautiously back. Pringle and the two Dragoons were still arguing.

Julian slithered forward. He reached the other side of the hedge and the field beyond. Here fortune was on his side, for part-grown hay filled the field, which gave him plenty of cover. He started to work his way forward, keeping close into the hedgerow and listening. Pringle and the Dragoons were arguing and chaffing amongst themselves. The consensus of opinion was they would wait until another patrol down the road came up and made the search in force. Farther off, other voices were talking, and Julian recognized the Kentish burr. There was a dell in the field and in it a small copse. If he could once reach those trees his chances would be better, but this crawling at a snail's pace was getting him nowhere. He'd have to make a dash for it, and risk the consequences. He jumped to his feet and started to run. The long hay grass made going difficult and any moment he feared Pringle and the Dragoons would come over the hedge, spot him and start firing. He reached the edge of the copse and threw himself down behind the shelter of some quickthorn bushes. A blackbird sped away with its warning scream.

One of the Kentish voices spoke, now close to where Julian lay.

"What be that, Nicholas?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Nicholas. "Somebody shooting rabbits, by the sound of it. Didn't ye hear that gun go off time since? These blackbirds are a look-out if ever there was."

Julian got his bearings on the men and moved forward. At the other side of the trees a two-horse waggon was drawn up; the men were cutting and piling hay from a last-year's rick. The waggon was near full already and only another truss or so would be needed to finish the job. He waited, saw another great slab of hay cut from the side of the stack and, borne by the two men, thrown upon the waggon.

"That'll be plenty," said the man who answered to the name of Nicholas. "Better to get this lot eaten before we cut the fresh crop."

His companion, a farm labourer, nodded sombrely.

"Sam Bulmer uses a lot of hay at the 'Dog and Bear'."

"Aye," agreed Nicholas. "He don't be a bad landlord neither. They say he's got a fine business stabling for those Dragoons."

The farm labourer spat on his hands and went round to the horses, and Nicholas followed him.

"There be a mighty lot of Dragoons about these parts, and pursuivants as well, for that matter. What be in the air, do you reckon?"

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders. "How'd I know? Only Parson Rogers says as how Bonnie Prince Charlie's making plans to come back again, and take the crown for his father from George of Hanover. That's what Parson Rogers says."

The cart began to move forward. Nicholas and his man, busy discussing the topics of the day, and politics as they came to them through village gossip. Julian saw his chance. He ran quickly forward, shielding himself behind the moving hay-cart, caught on to it and sprang lightly on to the duckboard. An instant later he was amidst the hay and safely covered. He sighed his relief and started to pick the worst of the bramble spikes and rose-thorns from his flesh.

Sam Bulmer of the Dog and Bear Inn at Lenham . . . that was striking a note—he'd heard those names before, but where and when? Ightham was not so far from Lenham. . . . Yes, he had it now. Polly Broad's uncle was none other than Sam Bulmer. He'd heard her speak of him, and now and again she had gone to stay with him; that was when Bailiff Broad would let her. So far, so good, thought Julian. He could claim an acquaintance with Sam Bulmer on the strength of Polly Broad. As like as not the landlord would not have heard he had left the bailiff's service, and he could hire a horse. That was on the credit side, and the debit—the fact that the Dragoons were billeted on the 'Dog and Bear'. But now was the question of just how he was to reach the inn. A guest, even if he had a hundred guineas in his pocket, would be a subject of suspicion if he was pitchforked off a hay-cart.

The farm horses plodded onwards. They reached the side of the field and passed through a gate and through a farmyard and a maze of high oast-houses. Now they were out upon a road, a narrow lane that wound about the boundaries of the fields. A quarter of a mile farther on the lane joined a road, and Julian, peering out from beneath the hay, saw houses were on either side. This must be Lenham, he thought. He looked carefully down the road behind the cart. A pair of children were playing in a garden, and a woman hung out clothes upon a line, but the road was utterly deserted, and there was no sign of Pringle and his Dragoons. Julian edged himself backward and reached the duckboard. He slipped his legs over and dropped easily on to the road.

"Heh!" he called. "Heh!"

Nicholas came round and looked enquiringly at him, whilst the farm hand reined in the horses.

"What be the matter with you?" demanded Nicholas.

"Why, master," said Julian, "my horse has thrown me and bolted into the bargain. Can you tell me if there's an inn where I can get a pint of ale and a bite to eat, and maybe the hire of a horse to take me onwards?"

Nicholas pushed his linen hat to the back of his head.

"You've come to the right fellows. We're taking this load of hay to the 'Dog and Bear', and host Bulmer might fix you up."

"Thank you, master, thank you," replied Julian; "and the pair of you shall have a draught of ale at my expense if you will show me how to get there."

The suggestion of the ale worked the miracle. Nicholas insisted that Sam Bulmer was the finest landlord in Kent, and what was more there was not a thing he could not supply—mind you, if he was paid for it. He thought Julian might be hurt after his fall, and insisted he should get up on the shaft and ride in.

Julian's arrival at the 'Dog and Bear', a pleasantly situated country hostelry, could not have been better. Nicholas was well known to Sam Bulmer and his introduction was sufficient.

So, whilst the farmhand and the ostler saw to shifting the hay from the cart to the loft, Sam Bulmer, Nicholas and Julian went into the taproom and ordered ale, at Julian's expense.

"You be from these parts?" asked Sam.

"From Ightham," said Julian guardedly.

"Ightham," said the landlord. "A nice place, Ightham."

Julian changed the conversation quickly.

"How are things round about here, Mr. Bulmer?" he enquired.

Bulmer grunted. "Much the same as ever was, except these Dragoons be about again. Waste of public money I calls it, though I shouldn't say that too loud, seeing as how a nice bit of it gets into me own pocket." He switched the conversation back again. "Talking of Ightham, do you know some folks called Broad? He was bailiff in those parts."

"Was?" said Julian quickly.

"Ah, did you know 'im?"

Nicholas was showing interest, and Sam Bulmer was full of information.

"Jasper Broad's been dead and buried this last month and more. A queer business it was. Seems he drank too much, and got hold of the wrong bottle of physic. Anyway, he's buried. And them that's buried don't come back to tell tales."

"Save as ghosts, Mr. Bulmer," said Nicholas, draining his pot.

"We don't want any ghosts," exclaimed Sam, and chuckled. "Jasper Broad was bad enough when he was flesh and blood without his coming to haunt us." He clapped his hands, and the potman appeared to receive a further order for ale.

Julian wondered what he should do. This Broad information was interesting. But should he press for further detail? The wrong bottle of physic? That sounded mighty like a repetition of something that had very nearly happened before. However, his immediate necessity was so to turn the conversation that he might hire a horse and get on with his journey. He sought for a favourable opening, and thought it might come when the

fresh pots of ale were placed upon the table. Meanwhile, Nicholas and Sam were discussing the hay prospects and the coming crops and the want of rain. Parson Rogers was to offer a special prayer in church next Sunday.

The door of the taproom opened and the farmhand came in. He pulled his forelock and accepted the mug of ale which Julian had already ordered for him. He drank the gentleman's health and retired to see to the horses.

"You have not a horse you could hire me?" asked Julian.

"Mebbe I have, and mebbe I haven't," said Sam. "It all depends."

Julian thrust his hand into his pocket and rattled his coins suggestively.

"How much'll you pay?" asked Sam sharply.

"As much as you want."

"Oh!" said Sam. He took a mug of ale from the tray the potman held. "Serve yourselves, gentlemen," he invited, and turned to Julian. "Where'll you be taking this horse to, and how hard will you be riding him? By the look of your clothes you've been travelling, mister."

"Does that matter to you?" asked Julian. "I said I'll pay, and that's what you want, isn't it? And if I hurt the horse, I'll pay for that too."

Sam relapsed into moody silence. Julian felt that somehow or another his suspicions were aroused. Had the Dragoons told the landlord what was in the air? He turned his head away and looked thoughtfully about the room. This was typical of its kind. A big oak door, and opposite a large open fireplace, the dispense for the taproom away on the right, and leaded windows to let in the light. Round the side of the dispense a staircase led away and upwards.

Julian looked casually at this staircase. He noticed that it was of oak, neatly banistered and without carpet. Bulmer and Nicholas were back to their discussion on the crops, and the question of a horse was in abeyance. The chances were before long the Dragoons would come in from their patrol, perhaps with them Pringle and the two fellows who had ambushed him. Somehow, before their arrival he must be away, yet if he showed himself too eager Bulmer would grow increasingly suspicious.

Light footsteps were coming quickly down the stairs. Julian wondered what type of female would appear. Would she be pretty, smart, slim, buxom, dark or fair? He continued his surmise and broke it off to gasp with astonishment.

Polly Broad, dressed neatly in widow's weeds, which were plentifully relieved with white, appeared, hesitated, and came quickly across to their table.

"Sam," she said, "I've been wondering when you'd come in. I thought you were in the stables. There's a note from Parson Rogers asking for two bottles of brandy to go up to the Vicarage at once. Those chickens from Farmer Giles aren't arrived, and what we'll do for supper tonight Lord knows."

"The Lord will provide," said Nicholas, and laughed uproariously.

"Mebbe," said Polly archly, "but it needs Farmer Giles to pull their necks if we're to have chicken tonight."

She swung about to see who was the other occupant of the table.

"Julian Brett!" she said. "Julian, what are you doing here? And dragged the wrong way through a haystack by the look of you. Sam, what are you thinking about, filling him with ale when there's blood on his knee and his coat's torn?"

"Do you know each other?" asked Sam superfluously.

"Why, yes," said Julian. "Didn't I tell you I came from Ightham?"

"Julian Brett," demanded Polly Broad, "what have you done to your knee? How have you torn your coat, and how of all things are you here?"

Julian repeated the same story as he had told first to Nicholas and then to Sam.

"Come on, Julian," she ordered, when he had finished his explanation. He followed her a little unwillingly across the taproom and up the stairs.

When they had disappeared, Sam looked slyly at Nicholas.

"She be a queer one," he said. "And no flies on her, as the saying goes."

"How do you mean?" asked Nicholas.

Sam shrugged his shoulders. "That man of hers hardly cold in the grave and she setting her cap for the next 'un. A nice bit of cash Broad left her, so in some ways she'll be a catch." He spat neatly. "You know, Nick, I thought she was as good as tied up. There's a fellow who comes here, off and on—Jem Pringle by name. He's a pursuivant, one of King George's men. Matter of fact, he's in these parts today looking for Jacobites, and the Stuart lads and the White Roses."

"Eh?" said Nicholas, following the information with interest.

"Yes, and I could have sworn Polly was thinking of hitching herself up to him. Mind you, he's a sly fox of a fellow, if ever there was one. And I never liked those who make a living of putting other folks into gaol." He hesitated. "What do you make of this young fellow, Nicholas?"

Nicholas blew his cheeks, and rubbed his fingers slowly up the side of his shaven cheek.

"I don't know," he said. "That was a funny story he told me about being thrown from his horse. And him knowing Polly the way he does, that's queer, though the world's a small place. I wonder if he's the fellow Jem Pringle's after."

"Pringle?" said Bulmer. "Well, I wouldn't help him to take any man, and that's clean honest straight."

Neither of the men had caught the clatter of horse-hooves in the inn yard, and when the door was thrown open they looked towards it with some astonishment.

Jem Pringle, followed by two Dragoons, their sabres clattering on the flags, came into the taproom.

"Why, Mr. Pringle!" greeted Sam Bulmer. "Talk of the devil and in he comes, as the saying goes."

Upstairs, Polly Broad closed the door of her bedroom and slipped the bolt.

"Of all people on earth, you—Julian. Your clothes torn, blood upon your knee, and scratched all over as if you had been rolling in the brambles for a fortnight. You didn't expect to see me here, did you?"

Julian laughed easily. "No," he said. "I didn't, Polly. I'm pleased to see you, anyway."

"That's nice of you," said Polly. "I haven't forgotten you, Julian. Do you remember that night at Ightham? Poor old Parson King, and a fine rough-and-tumble you had on the road, I hear tell."

"What are you driving at, Polly?" asked Julian pointedly.

She laughed disarmingly. "Nothing. Gossip. Only a fellow called Jem Pringle came round about Ightham after you'd gone. He asked one or two questions, and I don't think he was too satisfied." She was playing with him. Her whole attitude was a cat towards a mouse. "Jem's not a bad fellow, and I suppose if King George pays him, his money's as good as another King's?" She moved close to him and turned her face upwards, her trim full figure was pressing against his chest.

"Aren't you going to kiss me?" she asked.

"What would your friend Mr. Pringle say?"

Polly shrugged her shoulders. "I like you better than him. You're younger and stronger and taller. Jasper left a nice piece of money, and his lordship said I could have the stewardship if I found the right man to work it for me."

Julian side-tracked. "What about my knee, and the tear in this coat of mine?"

"Yes," agreed Polly. "You sit down in that chair and roll up your breeches, I'll fetch some water and a piece of rag to bind it up."

Julian sat down in the chair and she crossed and poured water from an earthenware pitcher into a basin. She pulled open a drawer, found a piece of old linen and began tearing it into strips.

"What happened to your horse, Julian?" she asked over her shoulder. "It's not like you to have been thrown. Why, you used to brag there wasn't a woman or a horse in the whole county you couldn't manage."

"I've stopped bragging," he said lightly. "Come on, Polly, have a look at this knee."

Polly wrung out the linen and straightened it out into improvised bandaging. She walked slowly across and regarded the injured knee. Besides the cut it was heavily bruised and swelling; there might be a trace of water. She spoke her diagnosis aloud, noting that he winced at the contact of the cold compress.

"Funny you should have fallen forward from a bolting horse, Julian Brett. Horses that take the bit in their teeth most part throw sideways or backwards, and the hurt's in the front of your knee." She started to bandage, finished the job and looked up sharply. "Likely Jem Pringle would be interested in this?"

"Jem Pringle?"

"Why not? He's scouring the country for a young fellow he says is taking news to that Bonnie Prince Charlie." She motioned for Julian to stand up. "See how that suits you."

He stood up and walked stiffly to the window. The knee wasn't as bad as he made out, but a bit of play-acting would do no harm. Polly watched him closely, but her suspicions were allayed. She walked back to the corner stand and began to dry her hands.

"See anything that interests you?" she enquired.

Julian shrugged. He made his glance from the window as casual as possible. Something did interest him very much indeed, but there was no reason for Polly Broad to know. The Dragoons were coming in from patrol and tethering their horses, after watering them at the troughs. They secured their chargers to ring bolts conveniently placed in the yard walls and went off towards the taproom, laughing and jesting amongst themselves, or ogling the serving-maids. They were Hessian mercenaries for the most part, talking German amongst themselves and shouting in broken English to their feminine admirers.

Immediately below the window three horses were tethered to a ring bolt. The Dragoons were so slack that the saddles were still on the beasts' backs and the bits in their mouths. They stood passively, the line of their backs not six feet below the window—a grey, a little skewbald and a fine big bay gelding.

"What are you looking at?" demanded Polly pettishly. "Those strumpets of serving-maids? Julian, now I've found you again I'm not letting you go."

He turned quickly and faced her; she was standing in the centre of the room. She was looking at him fixedly, her lips were parted and her eyes watched him with cat-like intensity. He saw her bosom was heaving and the wanton eagerness of Ightham was there again.

"I want you, Julian—I want you. Do you hear what I'm saying? You ran out on me once, but you won't do that again. I've got you this time and you daren't fool me."

He tried to parry her intensity and to make his voice sound light.

"What is Jem Pringle going to say about this, Polly?"

She tossed her head. "Jem Pringle might find what he's looking for and get his Polly into the bargain. That depends on you, Julian Brett."

"What do you mean?"

Polly smiled evilly. "Suppose I know you're the Jacobite messenger Pringle's searching for? You don't think I believe that pack of lies you told me? No horse bolted with you, Julian Brett, or gave you a knee like that."

Through the open window came the sound of a Dragoon's voice. The fellow was bragging to a serving wench. "... Aye, we shot his horse—dead as mutton. But those damn' Hessians were too late in coming up. Mr. Pringle, wasn't he wild when the devil slipped us! But a man don't get far without a horse, that's what I say. A man won't get far without a horse between his legs, and we shot his sure enough."

"So they shot your horse, Julian? I thought as much." Polly saw Julian's hand steal to his pocket. "You won't frighten me with pistols. You daren't fire, anyway." She laughed exultantly. "I've waited for this, Julian. Now what's your answer? Do I or the hangman get you?"

She took a step towards him, her lips curled back and her teeth showing pearly white. "Another woman, is there, Julian? What do I care, I've got you now, and you'd best forget her, unless you want to swing by the neck and have your guts torn out before your eyes. Traitors get a dirty end—good King George'll see to that."

"Stop, Polly! For heaven's sake stop! Are you mad? Do you know what you're saying?"

"Mad, eh? What if I am mad?" she laughed. "But I'm not so mad I don't know what I want. You thought you'd slipped me, didn't you? That old fool Parson King took you to London, didn't he? Set you up in Lord Primrose's house? I know all about you hobnobbing with the nobility. But now you're coming down to earth—or swinging above it. I'm tired of being a widow, Julian. Do you hear?—and I want you for a husband."

"To be poisoned same as you did your first one?"

Polly was startled, and a frightened expression came on her face. The exultant tone went from her voice, and she almost cringed.

"You mustn't talk like that, Julian. I didn't kill him. He was fuddled like he was the time you were there. He didn't know what he was doing, and drank from the wrong bottle."

Julian interrupted and held his advantage. "Which you placed handy for him? They still burn wives alive for husband murder, Polly. You and I'll make a fine pair; maybe they'll do us at the same time?"

She caught the banter in his voice. "You don't want to say things like that, Julian. You know the life I led with Jasper Broad. Haven't I the right to be free? I love you, Julian, I can't live without you. We've got money, everything you want. I'll make you happy, I swear I will."

She tried to wheedle, the while coming slowly forward. Her arm slipped about his waist, she pressed herself close to him, gazing up into his face and raising herself on tiptoe to reach his mouth.

A sudden knocking interrupted her.

"Who's there?" demanded Polly, turning and frowning towards the door.

"Jem—Jem Pringle," came the answer. "Are you there, Polly love? I want a word with you. What are you doing hiding yourself?"

Polly put a cautionary finger to her lips and sped quickly to the door.

"I'm changing my frock, Jem, making myself prettier for you. Don't be impatient."

The door bulged a little as a heavy shoulder was put against it, and the fragile bolt looked as if at any moment it would give way.

"Stop it, Jem!" called Polly. "Stop it! You've got no right to break in like this. I'll be down in a minute or two. Behave yourself!"

"I want to speak with you, Polly," called Jem Pringle, with a harsh directness in his voice.

Polly made a quick gesture towards Julian, her finger pointing across to the powder-closet, and she made the sign that he should hide himself in it.

Julian moved quickly across on tip-toe, pulled open the door and thrust himself inside. The recess, no longer used for powdering, was now a wardrobe, and it was filled with Polly's frocks, petticoats, stocking-bags, and all the paraphernalia of feminine attire.

Polly saw he was safely hidden, and turned her attention to the impatient Pringle. "What's the matter with you, Jem?" she demanded tartly. "You've never gone on like this before."

"I want to talk to you. Are you alone in there, Polly?"

"Of course I'm alone, but I'm not decent." Quickly she started to peel



herself out of her frock, pulling open the bodice, unhooking the sides, and stepping out of it. Her petticoat came off and she snatched up a wrap which lay upon the bed, and swathing this about her she crossed quickly to the door.

"Let me in!" shouted Pringle. "Let me in, Polly!"

"All right," said Polly. "All right, all right, and the devil take you!"

She pulled the bolt, and Pringle forced the door back on its hinges.

"Now do you believe me, Jem Pringle?" she demanded, making a slight effort to hide her pouting breasts. "What do you mean by breaking in on a decent woman? Are you satisfied, Jem? Well, get out and stop out!" She raised her hands and pushed him furiously in the chest, oblivious of the fact that now her wrap had fallen open exposing a generous portion of her naked charms.

Jem Pringle glowered. "What's happened to that young fellow that you took up here to mend his coat and bind his knee? Sam and Nicholas said he was with them a moment ago, and you took him upstairs. Where are you hiding him?" He glowered round the room.

"Not in here," said Polly. "I'm a decent woman, and I don't need any blamed pursuivants to spy on me. You'd better keep to the King's business and let me look after my own."

Jem still hesitated, but Polly was on top of him now; a sound push sent him reeling back. The next moment the door was slammed in his face and she shot the bolt.

Polly listened. Pringle was moving away. She heard his footsteps thumping on the stairs.

"Come out with you, Julian. All's safe now, he's gone."

Julian opened the cupboard door.

"I've saved your life, Julian Brett, and now I want my pay. See? I saved your life for myself and not to share with anybody else." She began to move suggestively across the floor.

Julian looked quietly at her. "What'll you do if you get me? What use is a man who doesn't love you? Come on, be sensible, Polly."

"I'm a-fire for you—I'm a-fire for you, Julian." She made an effort to put her arms about him. "I'm going to have you for my own."

"Be quiet!" he implored. "You'll bring Pringle back with the noise you're making."

"I'm burning for you, Julian! I'm on fire for you."

Julian side-stepped her grasp. She tried again to put her arms about him, gasping and half blubbering in her desire. He realized he must act quickly or she would become violent and dangerous if he refused her.

"On fire are you, Polly Broad? Well, fire needs good cold water to put it out!"

With a quick grab Julian seized the pitcher of water and before she realized what he was doing he tipped the whole contents over her. She gave a gasp as the cold water drenched her from head to foot. The flimsy garments were clinging to her body, and her hair, dripping wet, was falling over her face and neck. She gave a piercing scream and went into a fit of violent

hysterics. She stood riveted in the centre of the room, drenched to the skin, and impotent of any other action save to scream herself hoarse.

Heavy footsteps were sounding on the staircase, and Julian realized he hadn't a moment to lose. He ran to the window and looked out; the three horses were there and a bay right beneath him. He climbed on to the sill and stood poised. Polly was still screaming, too hysterical to open the door despite the demands that were coming from the other side.

Julian glanced back into the bedroom. "My regards to Jem Pringle," he called.

The door fastenings gave way and at that same instant Julian jumped. He landed squarely on the back of the bay, and the frightened horse reared and began frisking about, but he caught the bridle just in time and, finding the stirrups, leant forward and slipped the halter. The skewbald and its mate, terrified by the commotion, were rearing and whinnying. Julian kicked his spurs into the bay's flanks and the horse jumped forward. Clearing the other horses, Julian urged him down the stable-yard beneath the arch and pulled left on to the main road. Behind, a musket was discharged and there came the rattle of pistol-shots. A ball spattered wide and another kicked up the dust ahead. Julian crouched low in the saddle. If only they didn't hit the horse, all would be well. More muskets and pistols were being fired and the balls were coming nearer. The Dragoons were taking better aim now their first surprise had gone. He turned in his saddle and took a fleeting glance behind him. The entrance to the 'Dog and Bear' was crowded with Dragoons, pursuivants, Nicholas, Sam Bulmer, ostlers, and serving maids. Everybody was shouting, whilst from a window appeared the head and shoulders of the infuriated Jem Pringle, who cursed and screamed louder than the lot of them. The Dragoons continued loading and firing their weapons, but the distance was increasing every minute, and as yet no pursuit had started.

As Julian galloped down the main street of Lenham, heads of astonished villagers appeared from everywhere to see what the commotion was about, but they had no power to interfere with him or stop his progress. At the end of the village the road swung away to the right and the horse, now thoroughly scared, took the bend in his stride. The line of fire from the 'Dog and Bear' was blotted out and once more Julian Brett was on the road to Dover.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### WHITE CLIFFS AND AFTER

DURING the long afternoon and evening Julian Brett jogged quietly on-wards. He knew he had something in the region of forty miles to cover before he would reach Dover, and after the first scare of his escape from the

'Dog and Bear' he decided to take things easily. If the Dragoons came after him he would hear their approach and have ample time to put on speed. On the other hand, he knew that nothing was more likely to excite the suspicions of the yokels than a man galloping his horse at break-neck pace. As the distance between him and Lenham increased without interference he began to congratulate himself. Certainly he had been more than fortunate, but he realized that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and now, besides the wiles of Jem Pringle, he must take into consideration the craft of Polly Broad.

By five o'clock or thereabouts he was through Smeeth and bearing away towards the east. By seven, with a bit of hard riding, he was close on Folkestone. The bay charger was fresh, he had done little that day, and therefore Julian was able to avoid searching for remounts on the route. This was fortunate, as, because of the trouble at Lenham, he had not dared to stop at the 'King's Head' in Charing because of its proximity, for the rule with Jacobite couriers was, no matter what the cost, they must not incriminate fellow sympathizers.

William Brent, the landlord of the 'King's Head', had a reputation of being friendly disposed towards the Jacobites. He was in the smuggling game and therefore willing to make quick money on any account. But all the same Julian was rather relieved that he had been able to avoid another stop. His plan was to reach Dover with the coming of dusk, to dismount at some small hostelry outside the town and to proceed on foot into the town itself. Arrived there with as few questions as possible, he would discover Castle Street and White Cottage, where Samuel Thrail lived.

Darkness was just beginning to fall when Julian reached the first outskirts of Dover. He looked about for a convenient hostelry and very soon he came upon the Goat and Compass Inn. He rode into the stable-yard and an elderly ostler came forward to take his horse's head.

"Good evening to you, master," he greeted.

Julian bade him good evening, asked if he could manage a feed of corn for his horse and water him. Was there any chance of food and drink for himself? The ostler could attend to the horse, but so far as Julian was concerned he suggested he step inside. Mr. Proud, the landlord, kept a good table and there wasn't a better cook than Mistress Proud in the whole of Dover.

"She was in private service before she married, sir. Cook to Lord and Lady Sefton she was."

Julian walked into the taproom and found a heavily built person, whom he took for Mr. Proud, diligently cleaning the beer-pots. He bought himself a draught of ale and, sitting down, enquired what might be done in the way of food.

"I don't rightly know," said Mr. Proud, but added that he would go into the kitchen and see what the wife had on hand. He disappeared, and returned a moment later with a large meat pasty and a jar of home-made pickles.

Whilst Julian ate, the landlord made some attempts at conversation. There were queer goings-on in these parts, he maintained, and rumour had it

that Bonnie Prince Charlie was just across the water and waiting a chance to land again. Mr. Proud was no friend of the Stuarts and looked upon them as disturbers of the peace. He had been a soldier in his time and fought under Cumberland at the Battle of Culloden. He reckoned the Highlanders were lower than beasts of prey.

"And what might be your business, master?" he asked Julian pointedly.

Julian shrugged his shoulders. "Horse cooping. I sell a horse where I can and buy a horse likewise."

"And steal one?" asked Mr. Proud.

"Maybe," said Julian, and refused to commit himself. He took out half a guinea and threw it on to the table.

Proud's eyes glittered at the sight of money.

"How much will that be?" asked Julian.

Proud was thoughtful and suggested half-a-crown, which was at least four times the market value of what Julian had had.

Julian paid without demur, and counting his change, slipped it into his pocket. The landlord was grinning to himself. This young fellow, with no eye to business, was a right one to be in the horse-selling trade. Who knows, he might make a bargain with him? He began to explore the possibilities.

The ostler came noiselessly into the taproom and touched his forelock. Julian, without turning, caught the fellow's reflection in a fine gilt mirror which hung incongruously on the wall. An unmistakable sign passed between master and man. A faint nod of the head and a flick of the eyelids. No word was exchanged between them, and the ostler remained standing beside the table with his position directly behind Julian.

"I'm in the market to buy a horse, young fellow," volunteered Mr. Proud. "Mind you, I don't pay fancy prices, and I don't ask questions, neither." He took a purse from his flap pocket and ran the metal neck-ring invitingly up and down.

"You mean you want to buy my horse?"

Proud winked his eye towards the ostler. "What I mean, master, is this. I'm going to pay you ten guineas for that horse, and you're going to sell him to me for that same money. And if, chance, you don't sell—well, things'll be uncommon ugly for you. And if, chance, you do sell, we'll part the best of friends."

Julian took his cue. He had heard of this sort of shady business in inns along the highway, and of travellers being deprived of their mounts and then thrown out to fend as best they could on 'Shanks's pony' with a few guineas in their pockets. Mr. Proud and his ostler were obviously of this business fraternity. If he did not fall in with their wishes they would probably set upon him, and trump up some idea he was a suspicious character. Anyway, if he remained until daylight came they would discover the bay horse was heavily branded with the Government mark, and the fat would be in the fire with a vengeance. If it came to a fight he knew he could handle the host and ostler, but in a place such as this there would be other men at ready call. He realized a fight was out of the question, but at least there was a chance of some compensation.

"Shady business, isn't it?" he demanded.

The door at the farther end opened and a great slattern of a woman appeared bearing a tray of flickering candles. These she started distributing about the taproom.

"Shady business, eh? Who's talking of shady business?" she cackled shrilly. "Things can't be shady when there's light. That's what I say: when there's light there ain't no shade." She came back to the table and thumped her great hand on Proud's shoulder.

"What's my man say about that?"

The former cook to the Lady Sefton had obviously run considerably to seed since quitting the noble service.

Proud shrugged his shoulders. "Why, Fay, it's plain honest business. Here's a gentleman as sells horses for a living, and here's me what buys a horse here, there and everywhere. We're going to do a nice little bit of business. Ten guineas and no questions, that's what it's going to be. Ain't it, mister?"

Julian jumped to his feet. "It's robbery, fraud, theft, malpractice!" He thumped the table with his fist, and made a good pretence of outraged feelings. The whole situation was fantastic. This huge feminine mass who went by the name of Fay, the shifty-eyed ostler and the sinister Proud.

"The two lads are in the kitchen; think you'll be needing them?" she asked in her falsetto voice.

"Likely, wife," agreed Proud, and counted eight guineas, three half guineas and five florins on to the table. He searched inside his purse and threw a sixpence on top of the coins.

"Ten pounds and ten shillings, master. Ten guineas for that horse of yours. I'll take his word he's a good 'un." He jerked his head in the direction of the ostler. "No better judge of a good horse than him."

Heavy footsteps echoed on the flagstones and from the kitchen passage appeared two hulks of yokels, one of whom had the broken nose and cauliflower ear of a pug. They advanced into the taproom, and as if acting upon a well-worn formula took up their positions barring the two exits.

"What'll you say?" asked Proud.

"What's the alternative?" demanded Julian.

Proud looked around to make sure his men were in place. "Alternative? There's two sides of the question, speaking plain English. On the one hand we do a little deal and buy a horse. On the other, we might have our suspicions aroused and think as how a horse has been stolen. So we holds the person in question until proper enquiries can be made—and gives him a darned good hiding into the bargain." He regarded Julian. "And don't you go feeling for those pistols of yours, master. We've got a pistol just two feet from the middle of your back, and likely to go off any minute. Terrible accident if it did."

The woman let out a cackle of shrill laughter. She evidently considered her man's humour irresistible.

Julian shrugged his shoulders. He felt he had done enough in the way of resistance. "It's a deal, Mr. Proud." He leant forward and began to

pick up the money. The ostler, pistol in hand, had also moved forward and kept him covered. There wasn't going to be any chances taken.

"Ten pounds and ten shillings," he counted, and picking up the coins he slipped them into his breeches pocket.

"Do we have a drink on it?" asked Proud.

Julian shook his head. "No, I've had enough of your hospitality. I don't want to lose my shirt as well as my horse."

Fay let forth her shrill cackle. Proud made a sign and the men stood aside to let Julian pass. He reached the taproom door and stood there with his hand upon the latch.

"You drive a hard bargain, mister."

Proud grinned. "Mebbe. Mebbe. I'm not quarrelling, am I? Good night and good riddance to you."

As Julian left the taproom and walked across the inn yard to the roadway he heard Fay's unpleasant cackle sounding again. The men were joining in and laughing uproariously. Julian chuckled. He was ten guineas the richer through this bit of twilight robbery. He wondered if Proud and the rest of them would laugh as loudly when they discovered they were trafficking in stolen Government property. The bay's brand could never be blotted out, King George's manner of marking his property was indelible, and he had a reputation for summarily hanging those who traded in it.

He put a couple of hundred yards between himself and the 'Goat and Compass', halted and stood listening. The quiet of the evening was broken by the sound of horses' hooves and the clatter of accoutrements. Dragoons on the move, there was no mistaking the noise, and coming at a good pace. He saw the blur of the horsemen and caught the gruff order of the sergeant. The section came to a halt outside the inn and wheeled into the yard.

Julian caught his breath. Somebody had informed against him. A shiver ran down his backbone, but he took a pull at himself. The lights of Dover were twinkling fitfully ahead of him. Pin-point gleams from the houses, which mingled mellowly with the star-filled sky.

As Julian strode forward the reaction of all that had happened in a crowded twenty-four hours pressed into his thoughts. Angela had made him take Champion, and poor Champion was dead. How could he find words to tell her of the loss of her adored horse? Champion had been the means of first bringing them together, and Champion was dead.

He turned into a side road, reckoning that this would bring him into the centre of Dover nearly as quickly as would the highway, and without the danger. Those Dragoons would draw a blank at the 'Goat and Compass' and come swiftly after him. He only hoped the altercation over the stolen horse would cause a delay.

Houses and cottages on either side of the lane were increasing in number and the route started downhill with a rapidly increasing gradient. The going was none too easy, for water-courses were cut deep in the surface and his injured knee began to pain him again. Vaguely in the darkness he saw a white-painted bench and a moment later a friendly voice hailed him.

"Good night to you, master, and as fine a night as ever was."

Julian approached and found an ancient rustic sitting on the bench. The old man moved up for him.

"Where be you going to, master, at this time of night? And on a strange road like this?" the old man quavered, and without waiting for an answer went on garrulously to tell about himself. He was eighty-four summers and lived man and boy in Dover and prided himself on the fact that he had never gone farther away than ten miles. Yes, he was in fine health except for the pains and a bit of a cough, and if those didn't take him off he expected he'd live to be a hundred and more.

"If you know Dover so well," said Julian, "you'll be able to tell me where to find the house of Samuel Thrail?" He considered a direct question would be safe with such an ancient.

"Sam Thrail," said the yokel. "Why, everybody knows Sam Thrail. What are you after, mister, a bottle or two of French brandy with never a penny of duty paid on it? Or a nice piece of silk to make a fine dress for your lady-love? Sam Thrail's the lad for all that. Or be ye one of those scurvy preventive men? Well, nothing I'll tell ye will help you to catch him."

"I don't want to catch him, I want to find him," protested Julian.

"Find him? Why, that's easy enough, master. You see where we are now? Well, about twenty yards farther down this hill you'll come to Castle Street, and if you turn to the right and cross to the other side there's a causeway running steep down to the water-front. Sam's cottage would be the first or second you come on. It's white-painted, and blue shutters it has if you can make 'em out."

Julian thanked him and bade him good night. He started down the hill, turned right and followed instructions. The causeway was cobbled and ran down an incline. He caught the unmistakable smell of the sea and heard the oily swish of the waves. A calm night, he thought, though here and there there was a puff of wind. He passed the first cottage and came upon the second, which was a larger affair. He went up the flags and knocked. From the other side of the door came heavy footsteps, and a voice demanded who he was.

"I have business with Samuel Thrail," announced Julian.

"What sort of business?" demanded the voice gruffly.

"A bunch of white roses," said Julian.

The bolts were pulled back and the door was opened to admit him.

"Come in here," said the voice.

Julian found himself in a low-raftered parlour. A wood fire was burning cheerily in the grate and the place was well and simply furnished. Here and there were touches of the arts of the other side of the Channel. The curtains were undoubtedly of French origin and the clock looked as if it came from Holland, as did a couple of fine engravings. He turned about and took in the person who had let him in. He was a small man, broadly made, with a round weather-beaten face, on which flourished the most magnificent pair of chopstick whiskers. The fellow was dressed in the clothes of a seaman; heavy leather sea-boots reached up to his thighs and his

breeches were tucked into them. He wore no coat but a series of horizontally striped jerseys which appeared in relays at his throat and wrists. His head was covered with a red knitted wool cap which ended in a long tassel.

"You've come to see me, have you?"

"Yes," said Julian, and he held out his hand.

The man nodded. "That's the ring all right, and I be Samuel Thrail. You come from Lord Primrose, don't you? Twenty guineas is the cost. Have you the money?"

Julian took out his purse. He counted twenty gold pieces into his hand, checked them and handed them to Samuel Thrail.

"Correct," said Samuel Thrail. "What'll you have? Rum or brandy? Hot or cold?"

Julian chose rum, and Thrail, without further ado, poured three fingers of the spirit into a beaker and added hot water from a kettle which was steaming on the hob.

"You're late," he said. "Did much happen to you on the way?" He answered the question himself. "I don't want to know, it doesn't concern me, anyway. It's ninety-four sea miles to Flushing, and by the look of things there'll be a good breeze blowing from the west'ard in an hour or so. Now then, Mr. Brett, if that's your name, you'd best get out of that clobber of yours. I'm a fisherman by trade, and it's fishermen who travel in my ketch." He went to a drawer and began pulling out the garments which Julian should wear. Jerseys, similar to his own; a heavy pair of cloth breeches, woollen socks, and a knitted cap of a brilliant green.

"Get into these," he ordered, "and I'll find some boots for you."

He produced a ditty bag from the cornice. "Put your own clothes in this as you take them off. You'll need them on the other side."

He went lumbering out of the room with his strange rolling gait, and Julian began to change rapidly. The clothes were freshly washed and spotlessly clean. That at least was something to be thankful for.

In five minutes he was ready, and Sam came back with a pair of sea-boots.

"Can you get these on your feet, mister?" he asked.

The boots were sizes too big, but the thick socks filled up some of the unnecessary space.

Sam Thrail viewed the change with satisfaction. "You'll do," he said. "And listen to me. You're part of my crew, and your main job is to keep your mouth shut. I do a bit of smuggling at times and there's not much I won't carry from one side of the Channel to the other if the money's right, but I like dead goods better than live ones. Are you ready?"

Sam carefully extinguished the candles and they turned and made towards the door. Here Sam stopped. "I'll be back tomorrow, Peggy."

A woman's voice from the inner recesses of the cottage answered him. "And mind you are, Sam Thrail. And watch out King George's men don't get you, neither."

"I'll watch out," agreed Sam.

As they walked down the cobbles towards the sea front Sam gave his views upon women in general and Peggy, his wife, in particular. They were worrying souls at the best of times, but the world would be a bad place



without them, and when you were hard put to and faced up against it there was nothing like a woman's sense to get you clear.

The cobbles came to an end and shingle crunched and slithered under their feet. There was a red-coat sentry, Sam informed, posted on the break-water, but soldiers were paid poor wages and a bit of bribing of the right size and at the right time could work wonders.

A shadow of a man appeared. "That you, Sam?"

"Yes, Dick."

"We're all ready," said Dick. "Is the gent going to walk out or do we carry him?"

"Let him walk," said Sam. And, turning to Julian, he gave a whispered direction. The water wouldn't come much above the knee, and if it did, what matter? Salt water never did any man any harm. He'd best hold on to Sam's shoulder for guidance.

They started to splash into the water, going forward slowly, and the outline of a boat came dimly into view.

"There she is," said Sam. "The finest and fastest ketch that ever sailed out of Dover, or the Cinque ports for that matter."

They came alongside her. "The *Peggy* I calls her, after the old woman. Can you hoist yourself aboard? That's right. Catch hold of the gunwales with both hands and pull yourself up. There's plenty of spring in water."

Julian clambered inboard. He saw the vague forms of other men. Sam Thrail had gone for'ard. There were snatches of hoarse conversation. The crew were hauling on the hand-winch and the ketch moved sluggishly forward as the slack of the anchor cable was taken up.

"All clear!"

"Aye, aye!" answered Sam Thrail.

A puff of wind coming from the west ruffled the face of the water and sighed softly amongst the rigging.

"Get the mainsail up," ordered Thrail, "and jibe her."

The boom swung round to catch the wind and the ketch was under way.

Ten minutes later the cliffs of Dover were shadows on the port side. A voice hailed out of the darkness: "What ship?"

Sam shouted back: "Fishing vessel *Peggy* proceeding to fishing-ground."

"Name of the master?"

"Samuel Thrail, registered at Dover."

"Aye, aye, Sam Thrail; and mind you don't get outside the limit. Don't bring your fish back in bottles this time."

Julian heard Sam chuckle. "They know you well?" he asked.

"Not so well as they'd like to."

Sam gave the tiller a tug, and eased the bow of the ketch away to the east. Peering through the darkness, he kept his weather eye on the sail and saw that it filled nicely. The men were running up the jibs and the extra spread gave her more way.

For about an hour they continued on this course. The wind was freshening, and by now they were well out of the loom of the land, but the haze still held and was growing thicker.

"Good smuggling weather," muttered Sam Thrail, "but there's a gun-

boat lying off and chances are we'll come up with it, Mr. Brett. They're getting nervous these days. To<sup>d</sup> much coming and going for the likes of King Georgie and his Ministers.

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when through the mist on the starboard side there came the red flash of a discharging gun. A cannon-ball whistled high over the rigging and the sound of the discharge rumbled over the sea.

Sam eased the tiller to starboard and the bow went over to port.

"See what I mean? They shoot first and ask afterwards."

A voice hailed out of the mist ordering they should heave-to and await a boat and examination. The *Peggy* gave no answer, and a moment later another gun was discharged, the ball plopping into the water half a cable astern.

"We've got the legs," said Sam. "Keep your heads down, my hearties, every one of you. They'll use grape next."

There was another flash from the gun-boat and a charge of grape-shot crashed through the rigging and ricocheted on the deck planking and thudded against the bulwarks.

"What did I tell you?" said Sam, and peered upwards morosely, trying to assess what damage had been done to the sails. "We'll lose a quarter knot, that's all," he said. "But you can tell Lord Primrose this lot will cost him a new sail."

Julian shrugged. "If that's all it costs his lordship he'll be content."

Sam brought her tight into the wind and rapped out half a dozen orders. Every bit of canvas was spread, and the water sang on the leeside as the *Peggy* heeled over. There was a bit of a lop now and she was heaving and pitching. They were doing somewhere about seven knots, and Sam reckoned they'd better on that, maybe nine knots if the wind freshened any.

"You'd better get a bit of sleep, Mr. Brett," he advised. "Want to go below?"

Julian had already sniffed the cabin, a combination of stale cooking, tallow, boiled oil and Stockholm tar, and he knew he was not sailor enough to stomach that.

"Aye, aye," agreed Sam. "Get into the shelter of the weather bulwark. You'll be dry enough there." He pulled up a length of sail-cloth and gave the edge of it to Julian. "Cover yourself with that."

Julian lay down as he was told. He began to realize how tired he was, and the sing of the wind in the rigging and the swish of the waves lulled him.

The gun-boat did not fire any more. Sam was right—they had the legs of her.

The port of Flushing in the middle of the eighteenth century was a hive of prosperity. The continent was full of trade for England, and England likewise had much to export for cross-Channel markets, and besides the legitimate trade there was a great deal of non-duty business carried on on both sides. The political situation of the period did not make the Dutch

too friendly with Hanoverian England; they were tightly tied to the apron-strings of King Louis XV of France, and largely cajoled by the Pompadour, Tercier, and the secret diplomacy. But, all the same, politics did not interfere too much with the trade of the honest and dishonest burghers. British vessels and Dutch vessels were constantly in port, loading and discharging and picking the best cargoes offered.

The *Peggy* made the voyage at an average speed of seven knots, and leaving Dover at nine o'clock or thereabouts, by eleven o'clock the next morning she was snuggling her way into her Flushing anchorage. There were very few formalities, and Sam Thrail knew the ropes so well that the Dutch officials gave his vessel only the most cursory inspection.

Julian had already washed and shaved, borrowing a razor—which had unexpected sharpness—from the master, but his linen was in a deplorable state, and as he changed into his shore clothes he wondered what he could do, for most certainly he dare not appear before the Prince in such a condition. However, Captain Thrail came to his assistance. He hailed a trot-boat which was lying off and bade it in stentorian tones to come alongside.

"Is Isaac Leah aboard you?" he shouted in English.

"Why, yes," came back the answer, and a moment later a voluble Hebrew gentleman clambered inboard.

Isaac Leah was a person who saw business in everything, and besides which Thrail explained he could be trusted—that was, provided you paid him for his services and not more than fifty per cent of what he asked. This little pot-bellied Jew summed up the situation. The gentleman must have clean shirts, and he knew the exact person from whom the best shirts in Flushing could be secured. Also, the gentleman must buy a new hat, and Isaac knew one of his cronies who would be eager to supply this necessity. The rent in the coat would also be dealt with and the breeches repaired or replaced. As for the question of getting ashore, Isaac Leah's boat was entirely at the disposal of the English milord.

Julian was amused at his sudden promotion to the peerage, but he realized that this was part of the stock-in-trade of the redoubtable Leah. He shook hands with Sam and received a last instruction, said tersely for Isaac's hearing, as to the prices that were to be paid, and went over the side of the *Peggy* into the trot-boat. Once settled in the sternsheets, Isaac became slightly confidential. There were two ways of entering the port of Flushing. By one method, the usual way, a whole host of questions would have to be answered before Dutch officialdom would be satisfied, and by the other, for the price of a guinea, placed in the right palm at the right moment, not a word would be said.

"Half a guinea," said Julian tersely.

Isaac shrugged expressive shoulders and accepted the reduced fee.

They landed way down the port, and for the next hour, under Isaac's guidance, Julian saw to the necessities of his outfit, and discovered, somewhat to his pleasurable surprise, that with the ten guineas he had made over the clandestine sale of the bay horse he had bought a veritable trousseau.

Rather pleased with this, he suggested that he and Isaac might take a glass of wine together, whereupon Leah stated that the exact spot for such

conviviality was immediately round the corner of the street in which they were standing. They entered a clean pleasant little beer-house, and a buxom young Dutch girl took their order.

"Is there anything more that I can do?" asked Leah.

Julian hesitated. He did not know whether he could trust the fellow sufficiently to ask him the whereabouts of the residence of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. But Leah took the wind completely out of his sails.

"The milord will now want to go and see the Prince, his master?" he enquired pleasantly.

"The Prince my master?" asked Julian. "What put that into your head?"

Leah shrugged his shoulders. To him it was the obvious reason of any Englishman's arrival in Flushing. Everybody came to see the Prince; in fact, the Prince was the centre of attraction.

"Big things will happen very soon?" said Leah inquisitively, but Julian refused to be drawn.

"Where does he live?" he asked pointedly.

"Why, at Maison Vasse," said Leah. "It is a big building just outside the town itself. Do you not know where it is? Then let me show you."

Julian shook his head. "You have shown me quite enough, my friend. Tell me where the place is. I'll find it for myself."

Leah leant forward, and dipping a stubby finger into his glass he drew a plan in wine on the table-top.

"Thanks," said Julian, and rose to his feet. "If I want you again I take it I'll find you here?"

Leah nodded enthusiastically. "Yes, yes, my friend. Isaac Leah is the name. Do not forget—Isaac Leah. And this is the Orange Gasthof. It is a German who keeps it—he is a good friend of mine." He dropped his voice. "He is a Catholic and he hates the Hanovers worse than hell."

Julian found Leah's instructions tortuous and difficult to follow. The Flushing streets twisted and turned in the most unexpected manner, and ran into each other with a bewildering and mazelike lack of method. But gradually he reached the outskirts and what was obviously the better quarter. The houses were larger and more imposing, standing away from the roadside and surrounded with high walls and heavy gates.

"Maison Vasse?" he asked of a passing Dutchman.

The Hollander grunted, and pointed his finger up the road to where a knot of trees stood on slightly higher ground amidst the pancake flatness of the surrounding country.

He let forth a stream of Dutch which was quite unintelligible, but Julian caught the word 'Stuart', and gathered he was on the right track.

'Maison Vasse.' The French name for 'house' was a link-up, and he remembered hearing from Doctor King that in February of 1749, when things had gone very badly for Prince Charles in Paris, Madame de Vasse, with Mademoiselle Ferrand, had been his protector. Madame de Vasse had a rich husband with Dutch property, and the loaning of Maison Vasse had followed naturally. Its position in Flushing and proximity to the English coast were ideal for the plans that were on hand.

Julian went slowly up the road. He noticed that Maison Vasse was surrounded with a high wall and its entrance was guarded by a pair of heavy-made wrought-iron gates, which were well in keeping with the riches of the Vasse family. Arriving in front of the gates, he hesitated and looked about for a means of announcing his arrival. No bell was in evidence and the gates were securely padlocked. He thought for a moment and, taking the bars with both hands, he shook them violently. Two men appeared as if from nowhere. The first of them, dressed in full Highland costume, complete with sporran, claymore and plaid, and the other wearing an Irish kilt of sombre brown.

"What do you want?" said the Scotsman.

"His Royal Highness Prince Charles Edward Stuart."

"Sure an' he means the Prince of Wales," said the Irishman.

"What's your business?" asked the Scotsman.

"And where do you come from?" demanded the Irishman.

"My name," said Julian, "is Julian Brett. I come from England and from Lord Primrose."

"Oh aye," said the Scotsman.

"We were afther wondering whether you'd turn up," said the Irishman.

The Scotsman took a key from the pouch of his sporran and unlocked the padlock, and together, both pulling, one on either side, they opened the gates. The Irishman bowed, his hand on his heart.

"Captain O'Sullivan, at your service, Mr. Brett."

The Scotsman made a like salute. "Captain Cluny MacPherson, and at your service," he announced, and motioned for him to enter.

They closed the gates again, carefully locked them. Formed up one on each side of Julian, the trio walked slowly up the broad drive towards the house.

"Is it usual," asked Julian, "for captains to keep sentry-go?"

The Scotsman and the Irishman exchanged glances. "Well, you see, it's this way," said O'Sullivan. "The Prince, God bless him, has an army, but all the private soldiers are away in England, Ireland and Scotland, and it is just the officers he's afther keeping here."

"Aye, that's right," intoned the Scotsman. He winked a sombre eye at Julian. "It's the general staff, if ye get my meaning, that's here at Flushing. But when we get to the other side, there's a hundred and more regiments already made up."

"Two hundred regiments," said the Irishman with conviction.

At this point MacPherson and O'Sullivan started to argue fiercely on the question of the potential size of the Jacobite army. Julian listened amazed at their vehemence and wondered what sort of information they really had. They reached the porch of Maison Vasse and mounted the imposing marble steps that led to the front door.

"Wait a moment," said the Irishman.

"If you'll bide awhile we'll find Mr. Andrew Lumisden, the secretary to His Royal Highness, and maybe he'll have a word with you," said the Scotsman.

"What about the gate?" asked Julian. "Doesn't it need guarding any more?"

O'Sullivan shook his head. "Well, Mr. Brett, the truth is we mounted a guard in your own honour, and now you've come—well, we'll just be afther using the back way same as we always do."

"Except when His Royal Highness is going abroad," snapped MacPherson, "and he goes by the front way." He shot a furious glance at O'Sullivan, and the pair of them moved into the hall.

For a considerable time Julian stood waiting. Both sides of the front door were left open and he could obtain an excellent view of the interior of *Maison Vasse*. The building was constructed in the French style, and he looked into a large hall from which a maze of doors opened out. Men were constantly coming and going. They passed from door to door, they crossed the hall to enter other doors, they carried papers under their arms, dossiers and files, and for the most part wore the Scottish kilt.

At last a door at the farther end of the hall opened and a thin, spare, middle-aged man appeared and came quietly towards Julian, pacing over the parquet with a strange cat-like tread. He reached Julian and greeted him with a half-bow.

"My name is Andrew Lumisden. I am secretary to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. You are Mr. Julian Brett?"

"Yes, sir."

Lumisden moistened his lips. "We were expecting your arrival, sir. You have been delayed?"

"Travelling is always difficult in England when you are on the business of the *White Rose*," said Julian pointedly.

"I hope nothing untoward occurred?"

Julian laughed. "Nothing very exceptional, sir, save that they tried to murder me, shot my horse, attempted to capture me, and I had the good fortune to steal one of King George's horses and sell it for ten guineas."

If Julian had hoped that this recital on his part would have caused any excitement from Lumisden, he was doomed to disappointment.

The secretary cleared his throat. "You bring a message for His Royal Highness? I must explain that the Prince is at the moment in conference with officers of his staff. I was wondering, therefore, if you could find some lodging in *Flushing* for the night and call upon us tomorrow at, say, 10.30 a.m."

Julian frowned. "But, sir, surely the information I bring may be of the utmost importance? Does not His Royal Highness wish to know the latest occurrences on the other side of the Channel?"

Lumisden shrugged his shoulders. So far as he was concerned the interview was at an end. He turned and began to walk slowly into the hall. Julian, refusing to be put off, followed him.

"You'll excuse me, sir, but the matters that I would discuss with the Prince are of the greatest importance."

Lumisden looked severely at him, and still continued his steady perambulation down the hall.

"Mr. Brett, obviously you have had no acquaintance with Royal etiquette,

otherwise you would realize that you do not discuss matters. You wait upon the pleasure and answer such questions as are put to you."

"Damn!" said Julian.

Lumisden looked startled. "What is that you said?"

"Damn!" repeated Julian. "I said 'damn' and I mean 'damn', sir! I am to be put off like some urchin after I have risked my life?"

Lumisden took him up with some spirit. "Your life, Mr. Brett? We have all risked our lives for the Cause. I do not remember your name as being one of those present at Culloden."

"No, sir," snapped Julian. "I was not there; but a new brain might be an assistance to the Prince's fortunes."

"I will not continue this conversation any more," declared Lumisden. "I am the Prince's secretary—I make such arrangements for him as are necessary. How dare you, sir, attempt to trespass upon his person!" Lumisden raised his hand and put it with a restraining gesture upon Julian's shoulder.

"What right have you to obstruct the Prince's courier?" demanded Julian, and gave Lumisden a push without caring in which direction he propelled him. The force took the secretary completely by surprise. He tottered backwards and fell heavily against a pair of double doors which were immediately behind him. The continental lock did not resist the impetus, the doors swung open and Lumisden went tottering through them to land with a thump on his back.

Julian's first inclination was to laugh at the discomfiture of the secretary, but his amusement changed to surprise. The room which was now disclosed was obviously the council chamber. It was beautifully furnished and in the centre, about a large polished table, which was covered with papers, documents and maps, a number of men were sitting. But surprised by this sudden intrusion they had half risen to their feet. Already half a dozen pistols were covering Julian, but he cared nothing for this menace. His eyes were fixed upon the man who sat in the high-backed chair at the head of the table. This personage alone had not moved or made any effort to produce a weapon. By the look of him he was tall, slim, but well built, with a fair complexion, noble and pronounced features and large almost melancholy brown eyes. The expression of his face was tinged with a certain sadness and he appeared to be almost oblivious of what had just taken place. Julian knew there could be no mistake as to who this person was. He was in the presence of Prince Charles Edward Louis Philip Casimer Stuart, the titular Prince of Wales.

The men about the council chamber were increasing in their menace. Two of them had gone to the assistance of the discomfited Lumisden, who was squeaking with rage and expostulating from his debased position. The other gentlemen, those who had drawn pistols, were advancing upon Julian, and obviously meant business.

With a quick gesture Prince Charles picked up a little silver gavel and tapped peremptorily on the table.

"Gentlemen, please!" he ordered, and his voice had the weight of authority behind it. "Gentlemen, please, this is a matter for me to decide."

He fixed his eyes, which were strange, luminous and compelling, upon Julian. "Who are you, sir?" he demanded. "And what reason have you to thrust your presence upon us?"

Julian bowed. "Your Royal Highness, you are the Prince of Wales?"

"Yes," said Charles.

"Then I crave your pardon. I would not have broken in here, only this person"—he indicated the irate Lumisden—"attempted to prevent me from my duty."

"Your duty?" asked the Prince sharply. "And what is your duty?"

Julian hesitated. "I have been despatched, sir, by the Earl of Primrose, and by the other Stuart Loyalists of Britain, to bring a message to you. I was told that my information was of the utmost importance and I was to brook no delay. Therefore I am here, sir. If I have done wrong, sir, I crave your pardon."

"What is your name?" asked the Prince.

The men about the table had started to murmur again. Prince Charles raised his hand and commanded silence.

"My name, sir, is Julian Brett. I am lately appointed agent to Lord Primrose, and my orders are to make contact immediately and with the person of Your Royal Highness."

A flicker of a smile touched the corners of the Prince's lips.

"Primrose's agent, eh? Well, Mr. Brett, if that be so I must compliment you, for you are the first gentleman holding that position who has yet been able to reach me."

The tenseness of the situation was easing, only Mr. Secretary Lumisden continued to glower.

"Has this gentleman brought despatches for Your Royal Highness?" he demanded.

Julian shook his head. "No, sir, that was impossible. To carry the written word across England is too dangerous, for if I were captured loyal heads might fall. What I have to report I have committed to my memory."

Lumisden sneered. "To your memory, Mr. Brett? What proof have we that you do not play us false? How do we know you are not a spy in the pay of Hanover?"

There was a tense silence. Only the Prince seemed to be at his ease. Julian took the ring from his finger. He placed it upon the palm of his right hand and held it out. The gentleman nearest to him, at a sign from the Prince, rose and took up the ring. He carried it to the Prince and handed it to him with a bow. Prince Charles took the gold signet and quizzed it through his glass. He sighed.

"The signet ring that my Royal father gave to the father of the Earl of Primrose. Yes, I recognize it. Gentlemen, we can take this as proof enough."

The doors were closed. The gentlemen of the Prince's Council resumed their seats and only Julian remained standing at the opposite end of the table to the Prince.

"Now, sir," said Charles, "let me first present the members of my staff." He made cursory and stilted introductions. The Lord Elcho, Father Kelly,



Sir Thomas Sheridan, the younger Sheridan, Sir James Douglas, Colonel Henry Goring, Colonel Ogilvie, and last of all, and somewhat unnecessarily, Mr. Secretary Andrew Lumisden.

All eyes were turned upon Julian, and he for his part told briefly the message that the English Jacobites had given to him. They asked for another delay. He repeated these words many times. England was not ready—Scotland was in the same situation—Ireland unarmed—and Wales distraught with Nonconformist bickerings.

A sigh of disappointment went round the table. These men were exiles of their countries. They wanted action, to get to grips with the enemy again, to win back their forfeited estates and to return to their homeland. Julian repeated every word of his message exactly as Lord Primrose, the Jacobite lords and Doctor King had told him to do. Hanover was strong and the Whigs held the reins of government in one hand and the purse-strings in the other. At last Julian finished. There was a silence, and Prince Charles made a gesture to the Council, giving them leave to speak and to make their observations.

The Prince glanced towards Lord Elcho.

"What say you, my lord?"

Elcho sighed. "The old story. Give us time, we are not ready! Beaufort, Westmorland, Primrose and the rest of them are in harmony with their miserable chorus."

"Damn, sir!" swore Sir James Douglas, and banged his fist upon the table. "We have ten thousand muskets, powder and ball to match. Does this fellow mean there is no one across the Channel to use these weapons for the Cause?"

Colonel Ogilvie shook his head. "Peace, Jamie. Peace. Mr. Brett only reports the decisions of others. Don't blame him for what he says."

A murmur of agreement went round the table.

Henry Goring touched the tips of his fingers together. "This time, gentlemen, there must be no failure. I long to be back to my own as much as all of you, but also I remember the 'Fifteen and the 'Forty-five."

"Agreed," said the younger Sheridan. "But if we risk nothing how shall we gain anything?"

The elderly red-faced Sir Thomas Sheridan exploded, and his face turned an apoplectic red. "Delay . . . think . . . deliberate . . . cogitate . . . postpone! Where do they find so many words with the same meaning? They must search the English language with a lice-comb. Let's put your Royal father back on the throne of his ancestors or our own heads on the spikes of Temple Bar. Damn, sir, let's have action, and to hell with Hanover!"

Sir Thomas's excitement brought on a bout of frantic coughing. His jowled face turned from red to the deepest purple and he sank forward gasping on to his arms, whilst Father Kelly beat him lustily on the back with the flat of his hand.

Mr. Secretary Lumisden turned to face the top of the table. A slight and rather disapproving nod gave him permission to speak.

"We've heard nothing of the Scots and Scotland, sir. Mr.—er—Brett has maybe neglected the fact that Your Royal Highness's forebears were

Kings of Scotland long before the ungrateful Sassenachs invited them over the Border."

The secretary looked slyly at Julian, obviously feeling he had scored a point.

"Yes, Mr. Brett, have we no word from Scotland?"

The Prince turned his eyes searchingly upon Julian. Father Kelly was after demanding if there was news from Ireland, but his suggestion was quashed and the priest relapsed into moody silence. The mention of Scotland had brought a strange reaction amongst the men about the council table. Their faces were strained and rugged, and by their silence Julian knew they were thinking of the horrors of the 'Forty-five.

A silence had fallen; outside and through the open windows came the cry of seagulls as they wheeled about in the sunlit air. The Prince's voice came imperiously across this reverie.

"I asked, Mr. Brett, what news have you from Scotland?"

Julian moistened his lips.

"I have news for Your Royal Highness from Scotland." He hesitated. "My lords and Your Royal Highness's friends insisted the message was for your ears alone."

"Insisted!" exclaimed Lord Elcho. "The devil!—they forget themselves on the other side of the Channel."

Julian ignored the interruption and continued.

"It was suggested, sir, that you should consider the merits of this plan before communicating it to the Council."

Julian realized he had avoided an ugly situation. At the first mention of a private audience with the Prince he had seen resentment on every face. Now the atmosphere was calmer. So long as ultimately the Prince's Council was to be consulted their *l'amour propre* was unhurt. Besides, their habit was to dine at three o'clock each afternoon, and the savoury smell of cooking from the kitchens was reaching their nostrils. They were already wondering what the redoubtable Hamish had contrived at his pots and pans.

Lord Elcho scarcely hid a yawn with the back of his hand. "Let's ask the Prince's permission and away to the cocky-leeky," he suggested. "If Mr. Brett wants private audience let him wait His Royal Highness's pleasure."

The rest of the gentlemen were of the same opinion, and the Prince giving his permission, they pushed back their chairs and rose to their feet. Only Mr. Secretary Lumisden and Father Kelly remained behind.

"Well?" asked Prince Charles, cupping his chin on his hand.

Julian looked at the priest and secretary. "I ask leave to speak with you alone, sir."

The Prince shrugged. "Away with you, Father. Get a good place at table and a full plate for once in your life."

Father Kelly bowed. "As your Royal Highness wishes. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*" He bowed to the Prince and, turning, glided from the room, his legs invisible beneath his cassock.

Secretary Lumisden cleared his throat.

"Now, sir, is everything as you require it?"

"Almost," said Julian, and eyed him evenly.

A hand-bell began to ring loudly in another part of the building and Lumisden cast a glance sideways towards the door. The smell of boiling fowls and leaks was overpoweringly savoury.

The Prince continued to smile. "The Burgomaster of Flushing has honoured me with the present of a dozen fowls. Too old for roasting—still, what matters? Hamish, my Highland cook, can make a fine stew out of an old boot. The leeks are a present from the Sisters of Charity." He paused to repeat the phrase. "The Sisters of Charity, monsieur, have a method of preserving leeks throughout the winter. We are fortunate in receiving what the Convent is unable to sell."

Prince Charles rose slowly to his feet; the Star of St. Andrew caught the light and twinkled on his breast. "Mr. Secretary, the last leeks for months to come, and when will you have the opportunity of tasting fowl again? Do not allow formality to deprive you of a good dinner."

From across the hall came the clatter of dishes, the ring of utensils and sound of carvers being sharpened. There was the high-pitched excited talking of hungry men, and laughter as dry sallies of wit went backwards and forwards between Hamish and 'his gentlemen'.

Lumisden hesitated, gave a perfunctory bow and was gone. Prince Charles sighed. "Mr. Brett, you must not misjudge my adherents, they are very faithful and devoted friends——"

He broke off as a knock came upon the door. A man-servant, wearing the Highland dress, entered. He carried a decanter and glasses and placed these beside the Prince.

"Thank you, Cameron."

The servant went as silently as he had come. The Prince took the stopper from the decanter and lifting it poured wine into the two glasses.

"A fair sack, Mr. Brett." He took up his glass and sipped from it. Julian did likewise, and found the wine light and pleasant. Certainly this weak Spanish sherry was hardly in keeping with the 'drunkard's reputation' which Whig machinations wished to pin upon Prince Charles.

"What is this news from Scotland?" he demanded with a sudden briskness. "You indicate the matter is for my ears alone." The Prince leant forward and his fingers held the stem of his glass. He made no attempt to drink again, but was eager to hear the news from Scotland.

Julian gave his information as briefly as possible. When he mentioned the Manor at Bannockburn, the Prince's interest increased.

"So you went there?" he said.

Julian bowed his head and continued. He spoke of Cameron of Lochiel, McDonell of Lochgarry, Patrick, Lord Elibank, the gruff Sir Hughie Paterson and Doctor Archibald Cameron. He spoke curtly of what they had planned and added no embellishments.

"My Lord Primrose and the English lords and gentlemen could not decide upon this matter, sir. They felt that as I had heard it I must repeat it to you. They stressed that the information should be given to you personally and alone, or else I was not to speak at all."

"Assassination," said the Prince, his voice so low that the word sounded almost as a hiss. "I must think of this, Mr. Brett. Crowns have been won

before by the use of the knife, the poison-cup and the bow-string." He frowned. "I would think it better to leave such methods to the Orient, where they belong. We Stuarts should regain what is our own by fair fight; let us go armed into the fray, not steal as murderers in the shadow of the night. What do you think, Mr. Brett?"

Julian hesitated. "How can I advance any opinion, sir?"

"Agreed," said Prince Charles quickly. "No, Mr. Brett. I should not have asked you this question. But why should we not strike off the head of the hydra which has entwined itself about our birthright?"

Without speaking another word, the Prince jumped to his feet and strode quickly out of the room, passing through a side door and slamming it behind him. Julian was amazed at this sudden change on the part of the Prince. He wondered if he could have offended him, yet he had only repeated word for word the message as it had been given to him. The double doors which led into the hall opened, and Lumisden put his head into the room. He was still chewing his dinner, and for a moment had a little difficulty in speaking. When he had gulped down the food he shot a question.

"Where is the Prince?"

Julian indicated the side door.

"Oh aye," said Lumisden, producing a pin and beginning to pick his teeth. "Oh aye," he repeated, and with his strange crab-like walk hurried across to the side door, opened it and disappeared.

For the rest of the afternoon Julian found time heavy on his hands. Captain O'Sullivan and Captain MacPherson were detailed to look after his wants. They persuaded Hamish to give him some cocky-leeky, though the bones of the fowls had been well picked, and afterwards he sat with them in the garden of Maison Vasse. Like most exiles, both O'Sullivan and MacPherson were anxious to have all possible news of their homeland. They wanted to discuss Glasgow, Edinburgh, the latest developments in Ireland, and more particularly in London. They wished to know the latest fashions, places of amusement, who were the reigning beauties and who the greatest beaux. They sought for scraps of information about horse-racing, coursing and shooting. But, curiously enough, they did not appear to have any interest in the political situation. They asked no questions about the Hanovers or the Whigs and did not even appear to be aware that Henry Pelham was Prime Minister.

Julian, when he had satisfied their curiosity, put a question. He wished to know what the Prince was doing, whether he would see him again.

O'Sullivan shrugged his shoulders. "They'll be talking," he said. "Though what it is they find to talk about I'd never know."

MacPherson agreed. "Aye," he said. "They'll be having a conference, and when they finish they'll be having a staff meeting and after that there'll be another conference."

After this information, conversation languished. The afternoon was balmy and warm, and both O'Sullivan and MacPherson, with their military duties of the day at an end, appeared inclined to sleep. They found a convenient resting-place for their shoulders and pulled their bonnets over

their eyes. A moment later the pair of them were snoring loudly. Julian watched them for a while and began to realize how excellent was their example. He buttoned his greatcoat more securely about him and, finding a cornice on the balustrade, snuggled down and went to sleep.

Mr. Secretary Lumisden had to shake Julian Brett with considerable violence before at last he could awaken him.

"Angela," murmured Julian sleepily. "Angela."

Lumisden, who had been told by the Prince that he must try to be a little more civil to Lord Primrose's agent, attempted a shaft of heavy humour.

"You're not in heaven yet, Mr. Brett, so leave the angels alone and come away to earth. I've a message for you from His Royal Highness."

Julian sat up and rubbed his eyes sleepily. Full of apology, he rose to his feet, and, still half awake, found himself listening to a rigmarole of instructions.

The Prince's orders were that Julian was to be on the fish-quay of Flushing Harbour at ten o'clock that evening. He was to discover and go aboard a Dutch eel-boat named the *Hans Kubler*, and the master of that vessel would be pre-advised of his coming. It was now after seven o'clock, so Mr. Lumisden informed, and Julian was at liberty to go where he pleased and do what he liked until the appointed hour.

Julian made his *adieux* to O'Sullivan and MacPherson, and they walked with him to the gate. They would meet again, and soon, and that would be when Prince Charlie, as Regent to his Royal father, rode in triumph through the streets of London. Brett was to make sure that the prettiest ladies and the sprightliest girls were specially reserved for the captains of the Prince's bodyguard.

"I'll see to that," he laughed. He watched the great gates being shut and padlocked behind him. Maison Vasse was as silent as the grave. He wondered whether the optimism of these two Jacobite adventurers was in harmony with the lack of activity that their headquarters betrayed.

Julian made his way slowly back to the town of Flushing. Nearly all the shops were shut, but he went to the Orange Gasthof and here had the good fortune to discover Isaac Leah. The fact that the stores had put up their shutters was not the slightest disadvantage to him. He asked Julian to make a list of what he required and at once set off on his errands. Three-quarters of an hour later he was back and produced a heap of articles from his valise. There were ribbons in a multitude of colours for the female staff of Primrose House; a set of 'Ulysses' freshly printed and beautifully illuminated for Doctor King; a new black silk stock for Boulter, and the same, but not of such rich quality, for Elliott; a pair of leather saddle-bags for the stud groom; and a silver pin-tray for Lady Primrose; Lord Primrose was to receive a pounce-box, and Julian hoped that his employers would be willing to accept such gifts from him. The *pièce de résistance* was a set of silver scent and cordial bottles for the Lady Angela. They were small but pretty and of perfect workmanship. The whole cost of the purchases was just under ten guineas, and as he paid over the money Julian salved his conscience with the knowledge that he was paying for these gifts with his horse-dealing profits.

"What about food?" asked Leah, and insisted that he would pay for the repast.

A quarter of an hour later Julian was sitting down to a dish of grilled veal steaks and plentiful spring vegetables, which were followed by a strawberry pasty and cream.

"How long will it take to reach the quay?" he asked, as he finished the last morsel.

"A quarter of an hour," answered Leah. "I'll take you." He paid the bill and they quitted the Gasthof, being escorted to the door by the proprietor.

Outside, darkness had fallen; but Leah knew his way and they passed through a labyrinth of narrow streets until they reached the quayside with its forest of masts. Leah would not come farther.

"The *Hans Kubler*. You'll find the ship right on the end of the quay. She's an eel-boat and has a red gunwhale. The master's name is Trompe. He says he is a descendant of the great Dutch admiral. *Au revoir*, Mr. Brett." Leah disappeared into the shadows, and Julian was alone.

By now it was completely dark, and he was at pains to avoid tripping and falling headlong over the mooring-ropes of the vessels. At last he reached the upper end of the quay and hailed lustily.

"*Hans Kubler! Hans Kubler!*"

A voice from the darkness answered him. "Wait where you are, Engländer. I'll jump ashore and fetch you."

Heavy footsteps approached, and a hand grasped his arm. "You're right alongside, friend. Step aboard. Here's the gunwhale. Over!"

Julian did as he was bidden and his feet landed upon the deck. A lantern twinkled and voices spoke quickly in Dutch.

"Down below," said his guide. "The other gentleman is waiting down below."

"What other gentleman?" demanded Julian suspiciously.

"Don't worry," said the voice beside him, and he was pushed towards the companionway and down the narrow ladder. He reached the after-cabin, all but braining himself against the bulkhead. A man was sitting beside the stove warming his hands, and as Julian entered he turned.

"You, sir!" exclaimed Julian in astonishment.

Prince Charles smiled. "You did not expect to find me here?" He chuckled. "I am in your hands, and if my first assessment of you is right I know that I can trust you implicitly."

"Yes, sir, indeed you can," said Julian. "But the risk—the danger. Has your Royal Highness thought of that?"

"Don't talk to me of danger," ordered the Prince. "Listen to what I have to say. So many conflicting reports have come to me as to the conditions throughout my father's realm that I have decided to discover what is the real truth. I am, therefore, coming to England with you. I shall be incognito. Moreover, I intend to confer upon you the honour of military rank." He put his hand into his inside pocket and took out a parchment. "Read that. You'll see at your leisure that I have given you a commission

as Lieutenant-Colonel in my father's army, and from this moment onwards you are one of my officers and implicitly under my command."

"A colonel, sir?" gasped Julian. "You make me a colonel? Why, Your Royal Highness knows nothing of me. Why do you honour me in this way?"

The Prince cut him short with an impatient gesture. "I have the right to make decisions. Your duty, Colonel Brett, is to obey orders. You will go on deck and inform the master of this vessel I am ready to put to sea."

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### LIGHT AND SHADOW

MR. WILLIAM HOGARTH, the painter and engraver, first had the rumour, and, as his studio was in Leicester Fields, he was near enough to catch any gossip emanating from H.R.H. the Princess of Wales's establishment at Leicester House. Nor was there anything untoward in that Mr. Hogarth should communicate his information to the well-known actress Bette Hilton, who occupied his rostrum and was giving a 'life' sitting. William Hogarth believed in treating his models pleasantly, especially if they were notables or notorieties, for if interest was maintained the pose continued 'life'.

Hogarth gave the information casually as he was resting his mahlstick against the canvas and transferring on to it a somewhat obstinate curve of the lady's thigh. On the other hand, Bette Hilton's reception of the news was astonishing.

"Heaven forbid!" she ejaculated and leapt from the rostrum. In the great excitement she began to pace up and down the studio, declaring that she'd not believe it—not one single word—and the whole was a fabrication and a gossip. And before Mr. Hogarth could counter this vehement disbelief and substantiate his story, Bette, realizing her state of nudity, gave a scream of outraged propriety and snatched up her wrap. Enveloped in this, she seated herself on the edge of the rostrum and looked sternly at the artist.

"You are lying to me, William Hogarth," she declared tensely. "Because you wish me to look like the outraged Aphrodite, you have invented this cock-and-bull story."

William Hogarth shook his head good-naturedly. Bette had modelled long enough for him to appreciate her moods and tantrums, which were only rivalled by Sir Jo-hua Reynolds's equally lovely Kitty Fisher.

"The truth, Bette, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Bette Hilton put out her very red tongue at him. "Tell me again. Every word of it."

"But what about my painting?" protested Hogarth. "Look, Bette, I'll

drive a bargain with you. Get back into your pose and I'll tell you—yes, every word of it, while I paint."

Bette Hilton shrugged her shoulders. She mounted the rostrum, slipped out of her wrap, and became a very lovely and excited Aphrodite. Hogarth sighed with satisfaction and took up his palette.

"The scandal, William?" reminded Bette pointedly.

"Yes, yes," agreed Hogarth, painting diligently and with renewed inspiration.

William Hogarth had had the story from the head gardener of Leicester House, and his wife had heard the same gossip from no less a person than the officer of the guard. Preposterous! Obviously, but he swore it was true. Catherine Walkinshaw had interceded with Augusta, Princess of Wales, about her sister Clementina's unfortunate situation, and the result had been astonishing. The wife of the Hanoverian Prince of Wales and the reputed mistress of the Stuart Prince of Wales were to live beneath the same roof, or at least as near the same roof as to make no matter. The Princess had rushed in where political angels would have feared to tread. Remembering her life-long friendship with Catherine Walkinshaw, she had extended her hospitality to the unfortunate Clementina. The invitation had been sent and accepted. Even at this moment Clementina was journeying from Derbyshire to take up her residence with her sister Catherine in that small dower house in the grounds of Leicester House which was Catherine's perquisite as a lady-in-waiting and housekeeper to Her Royal Highness.

"Is that all?" demanded Bette Hilton breathlessly.

Hogarth admitted that was the sum total of his information. Much conjecture could be added. It was an open secret that the relations between Leicester House and Mr. Pelham's Government were anything but cordial, and perhaps this had been a deft movement on the part of the Princess of Wales to embarrass His Majesty's Government.

Bette had no time for Mr. Hogarth's hypothesis on the situation. She had already arrived at her own conclusions, and, being the proud possessor of such information, her one idea was to quit the studio as soon as possible and spread it abroad amongst her friends. From that point onwards she became an extremely bad model. She refused to keep her position, forgot her pose and generally annoyed the artist's creative senses so much that he gave up an unequal struggle and somewhat curtly told her that she might retire and dress.

"Thank you," said Bette Hilton pertly, and gathering up her wrap again, she made her way briskly towards the screen.

At approximately the same time as Bette, assisted by Mills, her maid, was relacing herself into stays, Lord Cooper in his study at the Temple was morosely gazing at a despatch which had just reached him in a red morocco, royal-ciphered Cabinet despatch-box. The document was written in Mr. Pelham's spidery hand and conveyed the self-same information that the person of Clementina Walkinshaw was to be considered henceforth as being *ultra vires*, as the lady was coming to London to stay at Leicester House as the guest and *protégée* of the Princess of Wales.

Cooper snorted angrily. It seemed to him that some tremendous plot



was afoot to thwart every move he took in the game. Already he had taken upon himself to despatch pursuivants to Derbyshire with orders to arrest Clementina, and now a tomfool situation such as this had arisen. He looked up from the despatch and frowned upon the person of Jem Pringle, who stood apprehensively before his desk. He turned his eyes to the left and took in the comely person of Polly Broad.

"If your lordship will listen," said Polly Broad.

His lordship was in no mood to listen. The explanation of what had happened at the 'Dog and Bear' at Lenham was infuriating. This fellow Brett had been allowed to slip through the fingers of Dragoons and pursuivants alike, and nothing the widow Broad or Jem Pringle might say could alleviate his displeasure.

"You are a damned fool, Pringle!" he snapped.

"Yes, my lord," agreed Pringle abjectly.

Cooper sneered. "You've let him go. By now he is on the Continent hatching treason against His Majesty. Had you been able to seize and search him, doubtless you would have found papers which would have incriminated the whole hornets' nest. We could have stamped out Jacobitism once and for all. Do you hear that, you numbskull?"

With some show of spirit, Polly Broad came to Pringle's assistance. To her way of thinking, his lordship was putting two and two together and making five of it, and, anyway, she had a way of dealing with this fellow Brett.

"Did you know him before this?" asked Cooper incredulously.

Polly declared emphatically that she did. She told the story of what had happened at Ightham, but was careful to explain it from her own point of view and showing herself in the best possible light. She even shed crocodile tears as she recounted the death of Jasper Broad. Julian Brett's ingratitude to those who had befriended him was horrible to think about.

"How do you mean?" asked Cooper briskly, and with some interest.

Polly sighed. "Your lordship." She hesitated, wondering how much her revelations would be likely to affect her prospects of matrimony with the abject Pringle. However, she burst into the episode at Lenham.

"He tricked me into taking him up to my chamber with a lot of rubbish about an injured knee."

"Whatever for?" asked Cooper, and covered himself hastily.

"And when he had me completely at his mercy," declared Polly dramatically, "what did he do?"

"Madam, I can volunteer no suggestion."

"He picks up a pitcher of water and tips it all over me, and ice cold it was into the bargain."

"Yes, my lord," substantiated Pringle hastily. "And that was how I came upon her when we broke in the door. Poor Polly, she was wringing wet, and lucky for her she didn't have her frock on, either."

Polly treated Pringle to a vicious glance which completely silenced him.

"What's that?" asked Cooper. "Why hadn't you your dress on? Why were you undressed before this person?"

Polly gulped and began to wail, realizing that tears, however dramatic, were an excellent shield against an inquisitive man.

"I used to think I loved him, but I know I'm wrong now. It's Jem Pringle who's the man for me. I loved him from the very first moment I clapped my eyes upon him."

"Pringle?" said Cooper. "You love him? Good lord—why?"

Polly's revelations and her incrimination of Julian Brett had started a train of thought. If he could once and finally turn Brett out of the Primrose household he would not only serve his Hanoverian master but also himself. There had been too much lying on the part of Primrose, too many glib promises from Lady Primrose, and too much avoiding of the main issue by the charming Angela. Now he had a weapon in his hands. He would now put paid to Brett once and for all. He rose to his feet and glared at Pringle and Polly Broad.

"Listen, you two, what you have told me is of interest, and it will be of more service if certain others hear it. You had best wash yourselves and smarten up and when you are ready let me know."

"Where are we going, my lord?" demanded Jem Pringle nervously. He already had visions that their destination might be one of His Majesty's several prisons which were dotted about London.

"You mind your own business!" snapped Cooper. He crossed rapidly to the door, tugged it open and went out, slamming it after him.

When, an hour later, Lord Cooper presented himself at Primrose House, there was no man who could be more charming. Any suggestion about Jacobite activities, or suspicions, were carefully left out.

Lord and Lady Primrose were in the library when his lordship was announced, and somewhat fearfully they rose to greet him.

"Why, William!" said Arthur Primrose unhappily. "You of all people! What a pleasure!"

Lady Primrose was a slightly better actress. "William," she gushed. "The strangest gossip, and you are the one man in London who can say whether it is true or not. They say that dreadful Clementina Walkinshaw is to stay with her sister in the establishment of the Princess of Wales. Did you ever hear such a thing! Guy Stanley has been here just half an hour ago and he's full of it. Bette Hilton told him and she learnt it from Mr. Hogarth, who is painting her." Her voice tailed off, for she saw, with a considerable amount of pleasure, the look of annoyance in Cooper's face.

"It is quite correct," said William quickly. "But I need not talk of the divine right of royalty, or whether or not royalty can do wrong, in front of two such loyal adherents of the old regime."

Primrose coughed nervously. This was the type of remark he hoped William Cooper would not be forced to make.

"However," said Cooper, his voice light again, "I've come here on another matter. This fellow Brett that you employ." He glanced searchingly towards Primrose.

"But he is already dismissed from our service," expostulated Lady Primrose. "William, after that terrible scene between you and him there was no other alternative."

"Of course, of course," agreed Cooper; "but all the same I thought there were portions of information you might deem interesting. For

instance, were you aware that Brett took your daughter's horse *Champion* on his headlong flight to the Continent? The beast was unfortunately shot by the Dragoons and I have a report of the occurrence. It seems that Brett refused to halt when called upon by a patrol."

Lord and Lady Primrose exchanged a quick glance, but said nothing.

"I wonder," asked Cooper, "if you were aware that Mr. Brett was going to the Continent? Anyway, he soon found himself another horse. Yes, he stole it from a Dragoon, and, not content with that, sold it to an innkeeper on the Dover Road."

"How terrible!" gasped Lady Primrose. "Has he been taken?"

"Not as yet," said Cooper. "I was wondering if you could give me information, whether you knew he was going to the Continent. I believe the destination was Flushing."

"Flushing?" said Lady Primrose, and laughed prettily. "My dear William, what can there be to have taken the fellow to Flushing?"

"I wonder," said Cooper ominously. He turned his attention to the weaker vessel in the person of Lord Primrose. "Where is Doctor Arnold King, my lord?"

Primrose sighed. "Why, William, he went walking early this morning. He told me he was going to Lambeth Palace to speak with the Archbishop's secretaries, and to discover if there was any chance of employment for him."

"He'll waste his breath there. And talking of the Archbishop, I had reason to go there this morning." Cooper put his hand into the inside pocket of his coat. He took out a document and fingered it thoughtfully. "Where is Angela?" he asked aimlessly.

"Somewhere in the house," said Primrose lamely. "Of late she has not been very well. No doubt she is resting."

"Then we must not disturb her," said Cooper. "Let us return to our discussion of the misdeeds of this person Brett."

"Of course," agreed Primrose.

"I have outside," said Cooper, "Jem Pringle, my head pursuivant, and a person named Polly Broad, the widow of the late Jasper Broad, who was Brett's employer before he came to you. She has been most grievously assaulted by this young man and I would like you to hear her story."

"Her story?" echoed Lady Primrose. "But surely, William, this does not concern us any more? Brett is discharged. We can no longer be responsible for his actions when he has left our service."

"Exactly," agreed Cooper. "When he has left your service, Lady Primrose. I repeat, when he has left your service."

"What do you mean?" demanded Primrose irritably, but he carried neither anger nor conviction in his tone.

"I mean," said Cooper, "that Lord and Lady Primrose are very clever people. They sought to throw sand into even the eyes of their prospective son-in-law. However, I tell you quite frankly, I have every reason to believe that Julian Brett was never discharged from your service and that he is at this very moment serving you and the Jacobite interests either at Flushing or in some other place on the Continent."

The silence that fell was ominous. Lady Primrose was the first to pluck up courage.

"You have spoken so many riddles and innuendoes, William, that I find myself quite dizzy. What is the reason of this outburst on your part?"

"I have said all this because it intimately concerns Angela," Cooper spread out the parchment he held. "You will read here a special licence for marriage from the Doctors' Commons, and signed by the Archbishop himself. It permits the immediate marriage between William, Earl of Cooper, and Angela, daughter of the Earl and Countess Primrose. I have come here to demand that you accept the proposition. If you refuse, I shall lay such information as I have—and it is considerable—before the Prime Minister and suggest that warrants for arrest on the count of high treason be issued, not only for you, your lordship, but for all those persons known to be connected with this treasonable plot to bring the Jacobite Pretender back to the throne of England." He paused, and, putting down the marriage licence open upon the desk so that all could read it, he touched his fingers together as he counted off the names. "His Grace the Duke of Beaufort. The Earl of Westmorland. The Lord Elibank. Doctor Arnold King—"

"Stop!" implored Lady Primrose. "Stop! I cannot bear this any longer." She steadied herself on the edge of the desk.

"You have my ultimatum, madam," snapped Cooper. He walked to the door and, without asking leave, pulled it open. "Jem Pringle! Come here with you. Mrs. Polly Broad!" he called loudly.

"Is this necessary?" implored Primrose. "Why do you thrust these calumnies against Brett down our throats?"

Jem Pringle and Polly Broad, who appeared thoroughly self-conscious, filed into the room. Pringle was leading and he took up an uneasy stance before the desk.

"Begin," said Cooper.

"Which of us?" asked Pringle.

"The woman, you fool!" ordered Cooper.

Polly Broad took a long breath. "I loved Julian Brett very dearly, and when he tried to poison my husband, Jasper, I readily forgave him; but he ran away from me and went with Doctor King to London. I heard he had a fine position and a great house and served a lord and many times I thought that I must write and tell his lordship what a villain this fellow Brett was." She paused to gasp for breath.

"Nobody was more surprised than I was when I came across him at the 'Dog and Bear' at Lenham. He told me a strange story that his horse had run away from him and he had hurt his knee. He inveigled me into taking him up to my bed-chamber to dress his knee and he made all sorts of innuendoes and improper suggestions to me, though I repeatedly told him I was already promised to Mr. Jem Pringle. When I would not give in to his guilty passion he took a jug of water and poured it over me, then, jumping out of the window, escaped on the back of a bay horse belonging to a Dragoon, which he stole."

"You lie!"

All eyes turned towards the door. Angela stood framed there. She was wearing an undress which bore out her parents' statement that she was resting. Her hair was natural and without powder.

"Angela!" demanded Lady Primrose. "What are you doing here?"

"I came," said Angela quietly, "because I knew I was to be the centre of a discussion. Yes, I was resting, but Lord Cooper's servants talked loudly in the hall. I could not fail to hear my name mentioned by these persons." She made a gesture towards Polly Broad and Pringle.

"Talking of you, my dear?" said Cooper, and cast a menacing eye towards Jem Pringle. "How could they be talking of you? Why, they know nothing of you, my dear Angela."

"They know, my lord, that I am my father's only daughter. They discussed what a creature called Johnson—your clerk, I believe—has told them. In fact, sir, that I am an heiress, and that at a price of keeping my father and his friends out of gaol, you intend that I should marry you. I think, sir, that clever little artist, William Hogarth, has done a set of plates depicting our situation, William. He calls it '*Mariage à la mode*.'"

"You are feverish, my dear, you are talking nonsense," expostulated Lord Primrose. "Obviously William is only too anxious to claim such a charming bride as yourself. In fact, he has stolen a march on us." Lord Primrose picked up the marriage licence. "He has obtained this licence from the Archbishop and is here to ask that the ceremony should take place without delay."

"Have you given him an answer?"

"Of course not!" said Lady Primrose quickly. "My dear Angela, such a matter is for your decision. Marriage is a very binding state, and as your parents we are eager for your happiness, which William has promised to consider and cherish in every way."

"Happiness?" said Angela slowly. "That is a fatal word. What is my happiness compared with the sacrifice I must make to keep my father's head upon his shoulders?"

"What's that?" demanded Cooper angrily.

Angela eyed him evenly. "I repeat exactly what I have heard, and from the lips of this person." She indicated Pringle, who looked as if he wished the earth would open and swallow him. "You will pardon the coarseness if I repeat his words verbatim. He said: 'And so you see, it's all thought out. His lordship gets the girl and the money; old Primrose keeps his napper on and everybody's happy, so to speak.'"

With a roar of fury Cooper sprang upon Pringle. "Get out!" he shouted. "Get out of here! You loud-mouthed fool! You blithering jackanapes!" He grabbed a heavy ruler from the desk and began beating the terrified Pringle about the head and shoulders.

With a roar of pain under this shower of blows Pringle ran towards the door and Cooper after him, whilst Polly Broad, seeing safety in retreat, ran in the rear of them. At the door Cooper halted, landed a well-planted kick upon the fumbling Pringle, which sent him toppling into the corridor, and Polly, unable to stop, cannoned into him and the two fell in a heap of arms and legs upon the floor.

Cooper slammed the door and came back. He eyed Lord and Lady Primrose and bowed. He looked towards Angela.

"Angela, you must not believe what these people have said. It is a plot to calumniate me. Please believe me. I do everything for the best."

"A poor best, William," said Lord Primrose involuntarily. But Angela Primrose checked him with a look.

"You still wish to marry me, William? Very well, I have no objection, and, at least on your side, circumstances have made you very frank." Her voice cut like a lash. "As marriages are two-sided perhaps I may be frank with you."

"I am waiting, Angela," said Cooper. His assurance was returning to him.

"Very well. If you wish to make me your wife, you must understand that I belong to somebody else."

"To somebody else?" gasped Lady Primrose. "What rubbish is this?"

Angela looked at her mother and turned her gaze on Lord Cooper. "I speak the truth. William can marry me if he will—that he has force enough to do. But before he marries me, I tell him this—my soul, my love and my body belong to another man. You don't believe me. Very well, I shall name him. I belong to Julian Brett, and Julian and I have plighted our troth. I am his, and you, William, must understand that. You can wed me, and hold me by force, but always I shall love the man that I chose with a free heart. Nothing will change my sentiments, they are unalterable; but to save my father's head and pander to a blackmailer I shall not hesitate to carry through the farce that you'd call marriage."

"You lie!" stormed Cooper. "Angela, you're lying!"

Angela dare not look at her father or mother. She did not want to see the consternation in their faces. This was the moment when she had to deal with Cooper and with him alone.

"Your soul belongs to Julian Brett," he sneered. "Then, my pretty Angela, your soul shall be a widow before many days are out. I'll swear that for you. He'll be gibbeted for high treason, and when the execution is carried out, in all its bloodiness, I'll come and claim you, or else your father's head!"

He swung upon his heel and strode out of the library. He slammed the door after him, and in the silence that followed they could hear his heavy footsteps on the corridor, and the whimpering explanations and expostulations of the terrified Pringle and the chastened Polly Broad.

. . . . .

"*Aequam memento rebus in arduis servare mentem.*" Lord Primrose murmured the Latin tag again and again, but despite the meaning, he found during the hours that followed that he had anything 'but a calm mind in the face of difficulties'. He felt he was faced with dilemma, even with disaster, and it were as if the whole world about him had come suddenly tumbling about his ears. He could almost feel the razor edge of the headman's axe upon his neck. He died a thousand deaths, yet lived to die a thousand

more, and each with a greater mental agony than the last. Neither his wife nor Doctor King, hastily called into conference, could provide a solution to the problems which confronted them. In the main, their difficulties divided into two parts: in the first there was the question of William Cooper's angry revelations. The Solicitor-General in his rage had gone further than decorum otherwise would have allowed him to do, but the fact that he knew so much of what was going on in Jacobite circles was alarming in the extreme. Lord Primrose wished to acquaint the other Jacobite lords of what had occurred. He desired to send surreptitious messages to the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Westmorland and the others and warn them of the danger. Both Doctor King and Lady Primrose were against this measure. They maintained that their movements and communications were doubtless watched, and to make a contact save in a moment of the direst necessity would be courting disaster. Besides, as Mary Primrose pointed out, on the very next day she was giving a large reception at Primrose House and already the invitations had been issued. These included all the Jacobite leaders, and they would come in the normal course of events. Surely it were better to pass the warning at that moment without arousing unnecessary suspicions by a more dramatic method?

This brought the consideration of the second part of their difficulty. Angela Primrose, after her dramatic revelation concerning herself and Julian Brett, had been completely intractable. She would not add a single word to what she had said. She refused to explain how, when or where the liaison between herself and Brett had taken place. She became entirely unresponsive, she had nothing more to say upon the matter, and she added to her parents' embarrassment by declaring that she would go through the farce of marriage with Cooper; but he must clearly understand that there could be no love, and she, on her part, would make not the slightest effort to deny the fact that she had already been possessed by another man. The circumstantial evidence which Cooper had produced lent to the veracity of these revelations. Champion had disappeared from the stables, and Angela stuck to her guns. She had told Julian Brett to take the horse because she realized he was upon a dangerous mission and needed to be mounted in the best possible manner. She was quite content—in fact pleased—that Julian should have had the benefit of Champion's sterling qualities.

"What can we do?" asked Lady Primrose, with an air of hopelessness.

"We must go through with it, Mary," sighed Primrose; "but what a farce—what a terrible farce! Can you do nothing with our daughter, my dear? Will she not see reason?"

Lady Primrose shook her head. For many hours she had tried her utmost to instil reason and to extract a denial from Angela. The girl was almost exultant in that she had so compromised herself as to make it impossible for Lord Cooper to force his intended marriage and retain an iota of his pride.

Doctor King pursed his lips. "Mary," he said, "it seems to me that Angela is more delighted to have thwarted Cooper than at her liaison with Julian Brett."

"I don't know," said Lady Primrose hopelessly. "She is so strange, and

so different. Arthur, you and I were fools ever to believe that such a thing could have been brought about."

Arthur Primrose rubbed his forehead wearily, and began to remonstrate with Doctor King. Doctor King had brought Julian to the household, he had persuaded them to give the young fellow employment, and their kindness had been abused in this manner. He repeated what Polly Broad had said and the accusations which Lord Cooper had levelled. These Doctor King refused to accept. So far as the happenings at Ightham were concerned, he had heard Julian's side of the story, and this he believed implicitly. Moreover, he argued, if Julian had run from this woman whom he termed a would-be murderess, how then would he attempt a fresh liaison with her on a chance meeting at the 'Dog and Bear'? The accusation was too fantastic for even a moment's consideration.

Wearily, Lord and Lady Primrose and Doctor King arrived at the same conclusion. They must give no food for further suspicion to the Whigs. Somehow or other the reception must be held, nothing of its grandeur or splendour must be cancelled, and during the entertainment news of the impending danger would be passed to the Stuart adherents.

So far as Angela was concerned, she must stop her moping and defiant attitude. That was decided, and Lady Primrose promised that she would argue some sense into her daughter's head. Angela must attend in all her splendour, and even if she were to act the part, she must play it with every semblance of reality.

Four o'clock the next afternoon found Angela still in her bedroom and attended upon by the devoted Evans. Throughout the whole day there had been no contact between herself and her parents, and this very fact filled her with apprehension. From the noises she heard about the house, and the news which Evans brought her from the servants' hall, she knew that the reception was to be held. As yet, no indication had come to her as to what part she was to play in it. All contact with the outside world had been denied to her. When Bette Hilton had called that morning to give her her accustomed lesson in elocution she had been refused access to Angela. She had gone away mystified, but Evans had later brought Angela a note which had been surreptitiously given to her by Molly Mills and in which her young mistress found comfort.

*Darling Angela* [Bette Hilton had written],

*So you have taken the Cooper bull by the horns. Mind you hold tight and don't let him slip you or he will gore you as sure as fate.*

Lady Angela put aside the note and looked towards her tire-maid.

"What do you think they are going to do with me?" asked Angela.

Evans, who was busily running ribbons through a petticoat hem, looked up. "How can I say, my lady? What is done can't be undone. And if you belongs to Mr. Brett—well, you belongs to Mr. Brett, and all the powers of the world can't change the forces of nature."

"Yes," agreed Angela. "But what's going to happen to Julian—to



Mr. Brett, I mean? You see, I made him do all this. I've been the leader, and instead of blaming me they're going to blame him."

"From what I've seen of Mr. Brett," said Evans with conviction, "he's a young gentleman who's well able to look after himself." Evans's assurance on this point pleased Angela.

"Are you sure, Evans?" She lost herself in meditation. After a moment she spoke her thoughts aloud. "I always hated Lord Cooper, and when I was very nearly desperate I went to Mrs. Hilton."

"Mrs. Hilton?" echoed Evans.

"Yes," said Angela thoughtfully. "She suggested all this business about compromise. And then . . . when he came here that night, before he was leaving, and said he wanted to help me, I knew what must happen. Fate and all the powers seemed rolled into one, and we knew we were meant for each other."

"Do you love him?" asked Evans breathlessly, the whole of her large body quivering with anticipation.

"Do I love him?" repeated Angela. "Yes, of course I do. But love's so curious. It's a feeling you can't measure with a yardstick or ladle out in pints. It's just something that is born all of a sudden like an enormous and wonderful flower that's grown up in a desert in a night."

An imperious knock came upon the door, and Lady Primrose swept into the room.

"Mama," said Angela, and rising to her feet she curtseyed politely.

Lady Primrose eyed her daughter sternly.

"I know why you've come," said Angela in a mournful voice. "You're going to tell me my fate. Am I to be sent to a convent as you promised yesterday and cut off from the rest of the world?"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Lady Primrose sharply, but nevertheless remembering some of the hot words she spoke on the previous day. "Listen to me, Angela. I have been having a long talk with your father and Doctor King. So far as this person Brett is concerned, that is not a matter I intend to discuss at this moment."

Angela appeared relieved.

"No," said Lady Primrose emphatically. "But, on the other hand, I am here to give you a true assessment of the situation into which your folly has landed us."

"I am sorry, Mama."

"Sorrow for the past will achieve nothing. I'm here to talk about the future. Do you realize, Angela, that we—your father and I and all our friends—are in a very unpleasant predicament?" She waved her hand peremptorily towards Evans, who curtseyed and withdrew. "Your folly has helped to create our difficulties, but these must be met. The reception I had planned will be held tonight. There shall be no cancellation, and you will be expected to be present. Do you understand? Stop your moping immediately. It is after four o'clock and more than time that you should begin your toilet. Do you hear me, Angela? And when I say toilet I mean toilet. No matter what your feelings may be, Angela, I hope you are Primrose enough to appreciate that your charm and magnificence tonight

will be expected to draw the comment of all. Yes, my dear, of all! And thus to relieve awkward speculation which your absence might arouse." She clapped her hands, and Evans appeared in the doorway. "Evans," snapped Lady Primrose.

"My lady," answered the maid with a deep curtsy.

"You will begin to dress the Lady Angela. Spence will be sent to help you. She has my full instructions on the matter."

"Yes, Mama," said Angela, and was mightily relieved that there was to be no further tirade. She accepted without demur the ultimatum that she must be present at the reception, and curtsied dutifully as her mother left the room. A little wearily she watched the preliminary preparations for her adornment. Evans was already taking out exquisitely laced petticoats, lingerie, stockings, new court shoes, and laying these almost reverently upon the ottoman. Now she was busying herself with hair-powder, pomade, mascara, carmine, patches, and face-powder. The choosing of the gown would be decided by Lady Primrose and the frigid Spence.

There came a knock on the door. Two housemaids appeared with a papier-mâché bath and jugs of hot and cold water. They spread towels upon the floor and put the bath into position, and Evans supervised the mixing of the water, testing with her finger to discover the correct temperature. Taking up a bottle of rose-water, she scented it liberally, and signed for the housemaids to withdraw.

"I feel just like a lamb who has strayed into a mint-bed," said Angela plaintively.

"Never in your life, my lady," answered Evans. "I'm quite ready for you." She took up a piece of soap impressively. "Quite ready for you, if you don't mind, my lady."

"It's cold," said Angela, and shivered slightly.

Evans hurried across and carefully closed the french windows. By the time she turned round Angela was out of her wrap and already in the bath.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### LADY PRIMROSE IS EMBARRASSED

ONLY those most intimate with the Primrose circle might have guessed that there was a lack of harmony. For the uninitiated and casual friend, Primrose House appeared in all its accustomed glory, and their host and hostess displayed their usual charm and hospitality. Everything was as it should be: the stairs were lined by magnificently liveried footmen; linkmen were at the door to marshal the carriages and sedan chairs and to help the guests to alight. Boulter, as usual, was in command of the arrangements, and he looked even more imposing than usual. He had arrayed himself in a black

satin suit, with silver buttons, which was made specially for the occasion, and his hair was powdered to a snowy whiteness.

Lord Primrose was present to receive the guests, and on this occasion at his side stood her ladyship, charmingly gowned in black. A very youthful matron she appeared, and not a line showing on her handsome face to give an idea of her years or troubles.

The amusements were the same as always. Cards for those who cared for them. Music for others, with Maître Papillon and his orchestra. Tables groaning with eatables and drinkables in the dining-room. Plenty of carefully secluded sitting-out spots for the love-lorn, or corners tastefully reserved for those who preferred scintillating conversation or gossip. All of the Primrose friends had been invited, and for once the invitations had even been extended to those who belonged to the Whiggish persuasion of politics. My Lord Sandwich came early, demanding a pack of cards and a game in his usual strident tones. Doctor King appeared to greet and converse with the more intelligent elements, and although not expressly bidden, Sir Guy Stanley arrived on time with the glamorous Hilton leaning on his arm. Bette's toilet as usual was a revelation of daring and extravagance, and Lady Sefton was heard to remark tritely that she wondered how many of Guy's broad acres had been sold to defray the cost. Rather fugitively, Mr. William Hogarth, the painter and engraver, appeared, and with him came his charming wife, Jane, a fragile beauty and a daughter of the redoubtable Sir James Thornhill. Seeing Hogarth greet Bette Hilton, that old roué Lord Portmore was heard to say loudly that he wondered which way Will Hogarth liked her the best, with all that clobber on her back or with the whole damn' lot off. Moreover, Portmore appeared to take some pleasure in watching the embarrassed blush on Jane Hogarth's face.

Lady Primrose was for cards, and was already hunting about to find suitable partners, but just as she was preparing to take her party into the Card Room the unexpected happened.

"The Right Honourable the Earl of Cooper!" announced Boulter.

Mary Primrose shot a meaning glance at her husband and waited for William Cooper to approach. His manner was studied and nonchalant, and too excessively easy to be natural. He waved a greeting to Bette Hilton, exchanged a wink with Guy Stanley, and bowed over his hostess's hand.

"You did not expect me, Lady Primrose?" he said silkily.

She smiled ravishingly. "Why, William, we always expect you!"

"Yes, yes, indeed," agreed Primrose. "Like the poor, you are always with us."

"Really?" said Cooper coldly. "I never thought of myself in that way before." He looked round, expecting to see Angela, but made no remark about her not being present.

"My cards?" sighed Lady Primrose. "Come along with you. We shall hardly get a game before supper is served." She left Arthur to extricate himself as best he could from Cooper, and fluttered off on the arm of Lord Sandwich.

"Have you heard?" said Horace Walpole, dropping his voice sufficiently to give the idea that he was imparting a secret, but keeping it loud enough

for any who had a care to hear. "Have you heard that Clementina Walkinshaw is at Leicester House? Yes, my dears, I wouldn't talk scandal, it's fact. . . . Old news?" He frowned. "I'm sorry."

"You'll have to do better than that, Horace," sneered Cooper.

But several of the elder ladies had not heard the scandal and it set them talking merrily. Opinions were divided. The Tories considered it was a deep-laid plot of the Hanovers and the Whigs further to embarrass poor Prince Charles, whilst the Whigs declared that it was a high act of charity and the Princess of Wales was indeed a lady bountiful.

"The King is furious," whispered Lord Portmore to the elderly Lady Horsley.

"Poor King!" said Lady Horsley stickily. Her dislike of the Hanovers was an open secret.

Gradually the guests moved away from the hall, and the late arrivals had been greeted and despatched to discover their various entertainments. Lord Primrose had disappeared into his study with Doctor King. It was said that Westmorland and Beaufort had gone there also, whilst Cooper, Guy Stanley and Bette Hilton had departed for the conservatory and, perhaps, a glass of wine.

Boulter surveyed the scene and glanced at the hall clock which stood upon the mantelpiece. In another half-hour supper would be served. His eyes travelled slowly upwards to the large and lifelike painting of Prince Charles Edward Stuart. Her ladyship was very conservative and nothing would change her, but if a butler's opinion went for anything, he did feel she had put the cat amongst the pigeons by continuing to expose this likeness of the Young Pretender.

Quick footsteps coming up the marble stairs from the portico interrupted his thoughts, and he turned to find himself face to face with Julian Brett.

"Mr. Brett, sir!"

Julian nodded. "Hallo, Boulter. Is his lordship about? I must see him at once . . . Yes, without delay. . . ." He checked. "The Lady Angela?"

Boulter drew himself up. He had heard much of what had been going on. "The Lady Angela is not yet down, sir. She sent a message some moments ago she was somewhat delayed."

For a moment Julian was in a dilemma, but he squared himself against his own inclinations. "No, I must see his lordship first, and please acquaint the Lady Angela that I am here. That's my duty, Boulter, I must see him first."

Boulter's face hardened. "Your duty, Mr. Brett, is for your own decision. His lordship is in the study."

Julian hurried away from the hall and down the passage to the study. The room opened out immediately before the library, and as he reached the door he saw it open and Lord Westmorland and the Duke of Beaufort come out. He stepped aside to allow the noblemen to pass, noticing they were deep in conversation and wore a troubled look upon their faces.

"Part of the cat's out of the bag," thought Julian. "Wait until the whole lot's out!"

Westmorland and Beaufort passed on. They took no notice of Julian, nor of his travel-stained clothes, which made strange contrast to the immaculate confections of the guests.

Julian watched them go and moved closer to the study door. He could hear Doctor King's voice and, occasionally, a monosyllable from Lord Primrose. He hesitated for a moment and knocked.

"Come in!" said the voice of Lord Primrose, and Julian entered.

Doctor King and his lordship were bending over the table and examining a heap of documents that lay thereupon.

"There's nothing incriminating there, Arnold," said Primrose. "Just ordinary correspondence." He looked up and saw Julian for the first time. "Brett!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir."

"I was wondering when you'd come back. Now, sir, what is the meaning of it? What is this cock-and-bull story that my daughter Angela has thrown in our faces? What is this ravishing of women—of women, sir? And my daughter one of them? Another of your victims was here yesterday. Her name is Polly Broad! Does the name Polly Broad mean anything to you?"

Julian was completely taken aback by this outburst. He looked towards Doctor King and found he was glaring at him with stern displeasure.

The Earl of Primrose continued his ranting. "I'll have you horse-whipped, sir. I'll have you thrown out of this place by my servants! Do you hear, Brett?"

"My lord," interrupted Julian, "you sent me upon a mission. I have come to report the results. Do you wish to hear what I have to say?"

"Hold your tongue!" stormed Primrose, letting his anger take full hold of him after years of suppression and management by her ladyship.

"Arthur," said Doctor King quietly, "you must hear what Brett has to say. There are always two sides of a question, and if you are a just man, as you pride yourself, you must hear his side. Also, remember, we have the Cause to consider—our Cause—the Stuart Cause."

"Damn the Cause!" cried Primrose furiously.

"My lord," said Julian, "if you will not hear of the Cause, then for a moment let me plead my cause. I swear by God there is no evil in my love towards your daughter. Love is the greatest motive in the world, it surmounts all obstacles, it laughs at locksmiths and it knows no class."

"Evidently," cut in Primrose; "but I warn you, Brett, I'll consider none of your arguments. My mind is made up."

"Then, sir, I can only plead you send for Lady Angela. That you will hear us together—and not condemn her unheard as you condemn me."

"I'll see you hanged first. I refuse that you meet my daughter."

Julian turned appealingly to Doctor King, and discovered to his amazement he was no longer in the study. Now he was alone with the infuriated Lord Primrose.

"If you will not hear me, my lord, how may I defend myself?"

"By leaving this house. By getting out of my sight, sir. That is your best defence, you blackguard!" His lordship raised his fist and advanced upon Julian.

"There is one thing I must say, sir," Julian stood his ground.

"What's that?" demanded his lordship, dropping his menacing fist. "Make it short before I call my servants."

"Sir, I can only plead that Angela and I have our eyes open to what we have done. I can only plead my love, and if my love for her can find no justice, we have already decided to set off together and build a life of our own."

"That's true," said the voice of Angela Primrose, and with a rustle of silk and satin she moved forward into the study. Doctor King was standing beside her, and her hand had rested on his arm before she moved forward.

"Julian my dear, Doctor King came to my room and told me of your arrival. When he said you were with my father I hurried to take my place beside you for this interview." She moved beside him and put her hand in his. She looked up at him and then at her father. Together they presented the strangest of contrasts. Julian's clothes were stained and dirty with the exigencies of his journey, his hair was dishevelled, the ribbon that held it untied, and he smelt definitely and unmistakably of the eel-boat.

Angela was perfection, gowned, coiffured and powdered, patched and painted with all the skill of two lady's-maids, the best modistes, coiffeuses and couturières.

Lord Primrose swung angrily upon Doctor King. "So you've become turncoat, Arnold. Who asked you to bring Angela from her room? Why have you taken this duty upon yourself? Have you not done enough harm already?"

The doctor withstood the outburst.

"Listen to me, Arthur. I have maintained from the start there are two sides to this question. The love of man and woman is God's making. What you say to Julian Brett is also for the ears of Angela Primrose. Be just, Arthur. Above all things, be just."

"I'll not listen to this parson's cant," stormed Lord Primrose. "What justice does this thief expect?" He glared towards his daughter. "Go back to your room immediately. Angela, I order you to do so."

Angela did not move, only she clasped tighter on to Julian's hand.

"If you have anything to say, Father, you must say it before me as well as Julian. What we have done we have done together and by mutual consent. He did not force me against my will, nor did I force him. If he is to suffer I will also and equally."

"No, Angela," said Julian. "Let me take the punishment. My heart has been yours from the very first moment I saw you. Let them break it for your sake, if they will."

"Very well," said Primrose acidly. "You were my daughter. Note my expression: you were my daughter. Now I no longer have a daughter."

Arthur Primrose eyed Angela and swept his glance onward to Julian. This was his dramatic moment, and though his fury had subsided he was still filled with sullen resentment. He was the injured party; he saw himself as the doting parent who had been sinned against. He refused to attribute to his own doing any of the circumstances which had brought about this calamitous situation. He returned his gaze to Angela. He took in the

girl's Watteau loveliness and, forgetting that he and his wife had been instrumental in creating her into this almost ethereal being, took sanguine satisfaction in wondering how she would face up to her change of circumstance.

Julian realized something of what was in his lordship's thoughts.

"Then, sir, if Angela is no longer your daughter, there is no need for me to ask your permission to take her as my wife."

Primrose started. "Wife, sir? Do you think that I would have a foundling in this family?"

Doctor King interrupted. "Arthur," he protested, "you carry this too far. We have no proof of Julian Brett's origin."

Primrose turned to vent his anger upon the doctor. He accused him harshly of bringing Julian to the household, of being a party to this betrayal and an accessory after the fact.

Arnold King withstood this attack in a true Christian spirit, but when his lordship had finished he spoke his mind.

"You are unjust, Arthur. Where it is a case of love between a man and a woman, it is no office of mine as a priest to condemn it."

"Thank you, Doctor," whispered Angela. She gripped a little tighter on to Julian's hand.

"Get out!" snapped Primrose. "I've made my decision. I'll not be reasoned with, not even by you, Arnold. Get out of my sight, the pair of you."

"Not until I have discharged my duty," declared Julian.

"Your duty!" shouted his lordship. "What duty have you? No, sir, you have done enough. I'll not hear another word."

"You forget, my lord," continued Julian quietly, and taking no notice of this outburst, "that I have a message for you from the Prince—a message of considerable urgency."

"The Prince!" blustered Primrose. "Do you want to send us all to the Tower with your talk of the Prince and his messages? Do you not know that at this very moment this house is filled with adherents of the Hanovers and members of the Whig Party? Not content with dishonouring my daughter, do you wish to send me to the scaffold for high treason? Hold your tongue, I tell you. Hold your tongue!" The tirade died on Lord Primrose's lips.

The door had opened and Elliott stood there. "My lord," he announced, "I bring a request from the Earl of Cooper. He requires to see your lordship immediately on a matter of the greatest urgency."

"Cooper!" gulped Primrose, and looked appealingly towards Arnold King.

"You must see him, Arthur. A refusal will only increase suspicion. Come," he said quickly, and touched Angela on the arm. "I must speak to you both—yes, to you, Julian, also. Hard words have been said. . . ."

Primrose glowered. "And harder ones are to come, Arnold King. I can assure you of that."

"Do I go without delivering this message, sir?" asked Julian evenly. "I warn you, it is of considerable importance, sir."

"You can go to hell!" declared Lord Primrose emphatically.

The first storm was over. Julian and Angela left the study hand in hand and Doctor King walked after them. All three knew that Lord Primrose was completely intractable in his present frame of mind, and therefore best left alone to unravel the skein he had created about himself. Certainly his lordship was in no frame of mind to deal tactfully with the Earl of Cooper.

"We must find some place where I can talk to you—yes, to both of you," declared Doctor King. "Things have gone too fast. Why have you taken the law into your own hands? Could you not have waited a little while?" The doctor's sentences were broken and he spoke with considerable nervousness.

Julian realized that any discussion as they went along the corridor was out of the question, but Angela suggested the little ante-room which was on the left of the main entrance. Here they were unlikely to be disturbed, and she was eager to be alone with Julian and also pathetically anxious to set the doctor's mind at rest.

Together they reached the Great Hall, and this was empty save for Boulter, who gave them a casual glance and continued his respectful appraisal of the sombre rows of Primrose ancestors. Angela squeezed Julian's hand. "You see how thoroughly we have fallen from grace? Like master, like man." She looked up at him. "I don't mind, do you? It's going to be all right—I know it's going to be all right."

"Hush!" implored Doctor King, and held open the door of the ante-room. He looked at Julian and saw the troubled expression on his face. "Julian, you are a man with a load of sorrows."

Julian shook his head. "Not the sorrows you think, Doctor. It's the Prince, this message I have to give. It is urgent! God knows what will happen if Lord Primrose is not advised."

Doctor King motioned them into the ante-room. "You must tell me, Julian, but in here. Every wall has ears tonight."

The door closed behind them. Boulter ceased his examination of the ancestors and looked across. He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. These were fine goings-on, he thought, as he quoted Mrs. Weelands' assessment of the situation. What the butler failed to notice was that the door of the ante-room had opened slightly and that Julian Brett was peeping apprehensively into the hall.

In the Card Room Fortune was beaming upon Lady Primrose. The whole of the luck of the faro game was running towards her. A pile of coloured counters, guineas and IO Us stood conveniently and impressively at her left hand, and with each throw she increased her winnings. Lord Sandwich alternately damned her luck and apologized handsomely. The ancient Portmore had all but reached the bottom of his purse, whilst the elegant Sir Peter Rocroy swore that either Mary Primrose should have his entire patrimony or he would have her winnings. About the table stood a throng of onlookers, who were elegantly amused with their hostess's run of luck.

"Phenomenal," said Lady Sefton. She flipped her fan and whispered warningly into Mary's ear: "Lucky at cards—unlucky in love, my dear."



Lady Primrose sighed. She staked again heavily, won and swept in her winnings.

"I'll leave love to look after itself, Roberta." She accepted an IOU gracefully from Lord Sandwich.

Doctor King came quietly into the Card Room and moved forward to arrive at Mary's side. He leant down and touched her gently on the shoulder.

"What is it, Arnold?" she said almost crossly.

"Julian Brett is returned," he whispered.

A frown crossed her face. "Brett? Has he seen Arthur?"

"Yes," said Doctor King. "I was present, as was Angela, a most painful affair."

"Don't let's talk of it," said Lady Primrose, and took up her cards and examined them thoughtfully. "How go the stakes?" she enquired of the table, and laughed. "Why, are you frightened of me, all of you?"

Lord Sandwich doubled up, and Sir Peter starred his stake with golden guineas. Lady Primrose turned up her hand and was again declared the winner.

"If Arthur has dealt with the matter, what can I do?" she said pettishly to King. "Arnold, have mercy! Let me forget for an hour or two about the whole horrid business."

Doctor King's voice was hoarse. "Listen to me, Mary, you must listen. I am not here to talk about Julian Brett and Angela. It's something much more important. Brett couldn't speak to your husband on the matter. Arthur was too angry, he would not listen to him. He held his peace; under the circumstances it was wiser for him to do so. He told me at the first opportunity."

"What did he tell you?" said Lady Primrose casually. "Arnold, I'm more than a little tired of your Mr. Brett."

Lord Portmore sighed extravagantly. "How long-winded the Church can be!"

A titter ran round those who stood about the table.

"Won't it keep?" whispered Lady Primrose.

Boulter came hurriedly into the Card Room. He paused, looked about him, saw where Lady Primrose was sitting and went to her side.

"Now you, Boulter!" She raised her eyebrows. "I must be the most sought-after woman in the whole of London!" She threw the remark airily across the table, and her poise was superb.

"You always were," said Lord Sandwich handsomely. "My dear Mary, from the first moment I clapped eyes upon you I have sought you."

She giggled girlishly, and gave him a gay look. "And now with this nice pile of winnings you love me all the more, Jimmy."

Boulter bent forward and there was a note of urgency in his voice. "My lady, I must implore your attention. A gentleman wishes to see you. I do not think your ladyship would desire to keep him waiting."

Lady Primrose put down her cards. She pouted and rose to her feet. "Alice"—she turned to the Dowager Lady Forster, who was standing behind her—"play my hand, will you, dear? Please forgive this interruption. I'll be back in a moment." She looked across at Lord Sandwich. "And see

you don't fleece her, Jimmy." She looked for Doctor King, but he had moved away. Lady Sefton had engaged the cleric in the toils of endless conversation, from which he could not extricate himself.

Boulter made a way for her ladyship and stood aside to let her pass. He walked solemnly behind her as she went, annoyed and imperiously, towards the door.

"Have you seen this gentleman before?" she asked Boulter over her shoulder

"I, my lady? Well . . . in a manner of speaking, yes"

"Which means," snapped Lady Primrose, "precisely nothing!"

By some misfortune Boulter had placed two footmen on duty in the hall. It was also unfortunate that the gentleman who so urgently desired to speak with Lady Primrose had chosen to stand with his back to the fireplace and immediately below that large portrait by Daullé.

In the full flush of annoyance Lady Primrose entered the Great Hall, and as she drew closer, she noticed an expression of extraordinary interest on the usually mask-like faces of the footmen.

The gentleman was wearing travelling clothes. His heavy riding coat was unbuttoned and his top boots were in dire need of cleaning. He heard Lady Primrose's arrival, and turned to meet her.

"Do you desire to see me, sir?" The words died on her lips and she turned pale beneath her rouge. "Your Royal Highness!" she gasped. "What are you doing here? Oh, sir, my house is full of people—they are of all parties, some of them your direst enemies! Why, Lord Cooper, the Whig Solicitor-General, is at this very moment with my husband." She began to curtsy, but stayed the movement. She reached out and took him unceremoniously by the arm. "Please, sir, if you could stand any place save beneath your own portrait! I do implore you, sir!" She almost pulled him aside, and at the same time gave a frantic gesture with her free hand for Boulter and the footmen to withdraw.

Prince Charles appeared entirely unmoved by his hostess's agitation. The danger of his situation, and in fact of the whole adventure, seemed to appeal to him.

"Dear Lady Primrose," he said caressingly, "please don't disturb yourself because of me. I can assure you I have known much tighter corners, and so long as there's a closed door between me and the Solicitor-General, why need we worry?"

Lady Primrose gulped. "But Your Royal Highness does not understand. We are giving a reception. All sorts and colours of political opinion are here tonight. I cannot explain—it is too long—but our situation has become precarious. We had to make this gesture. Why, sir, did you come to my house tonight?"

The Prince shrugged his shoulders. "To meet old friends and maybe to talk a few home truths. At least, I am not unannounced. I sent Colonel Brett, who is acting as my aide-de-camp, to advise you of my intentions."

"Colonel Brett!" ejaculated Mary Primrose. "I know no Colonel Brett."

"No, perhaps not, madam. Promotion is very rapid in my army. You

will perhaps recognize him better as Mr. Brett, that very gallant gentleman who brought your messages through to me." He did not allow her to speak, but continued: "You may think my coming into the midst of Hanoverian London foolhardy, but I assure you it has been carefully thought out."

"Carefully!" exclaimed Lady Primrose. "I have never heard that word so ill-used."

The Prince held his handkerchief to his lips to hide a smile.

"Forgive me, but I have had so many and conflicting reports at my headquarters in Flushing that I felt that, in all fairness to the Cause and as the representative of my father, I must come in person to this country. I wish to make a clear assessment of the feeling towards our aspirations. One moment I receive information that Britain is ready to rise and that 10,000 muskets must immediately be sent; but the next boat brings tidings that all is not so well, and a pleading for a further delay. Madam, my followers' hearts are as loyal as ever, but these poor exiles grow greyheaded with empty promises."

"Must we discuss this here and now?" implored Lady Primrose. "Sir, at any moment supper will be announced. The guests will come thronging into this hall—a hundred will recognize you, as those two footmen of mine have already done."

"Footmen?" asked the Prince a little anxiously. "Can they be trusted?"

"All our servants can be trusted, sir," said Lady Primrose with dignity.

The Prince smiled broadly. "I should have known that, Lady Primrose, after watching the steadfastness of Colonel Brett."

"Oh, do not waste your breath on him!" she said tartly, and looked about her anxiously in the hope that Doctor King might have appeared. She discovered, to her relief, that at this very moment the doctor, who had at last shaken off the volubility of Lady Sefton, was coming into the hall. He came quickly forward and, realizing that his action would be unobserved, bowed low to the Prince.

"Your Royal Highness—your servant."

The Prince greeted him pleasantly. "I am afraid, Doctor, that I have come upon Lady Primrose unawares. I had hoped that Colonel Brett would have had time to convey my message."

"Unfortunately not, sir," said Doctor King composedly, and he stayed an outburst from Lady Primrose with a look. "Colonel Brett did his utmost to fulfil his duty, but circumstances prevented him. He had some difficulty in obtaining a hearing from Lord Primrose, and her ladyship was so entirely engaged at the card-table that I myself failed in transmitting the message to her."

"You were winning, madam?" asked the Prince with casual interest.

Lady Primrose smiled an assent.

"Why," he laughed, "that is a good omen. If Fortune is on your side when I enter your house, she might also be on mine."

Lady Primrose's expression showed that her reliance in Fortune's whim was, to say the least of it, scanty. She turned to Doctor King.

"Arnold, His Royal Highness cannot stay here. We must plan an alternative for him."

Before Doctor King could stay her she had stepped rapidly across the hall and thrown open the ante-room door.

"Come in here, sir," she implored. "Come quickly!" Even as she spoke, the volume of conversation from the Card Room increased. The first hands were over and the guests were beginning to think of supper. From the drawing-room and Music Room came a similar sound of movement.

"Come, sir," said Lady Primrose, and, chancing to look into the ante-room for the first time, her glance of astonishment rapidly changed to an expression of intense annoyance.

Julian Brett stood in the middle of the room, his arms about Angela and, quite oblivious of the ravages he was effecting upon her make-up, he was kissing her passionately.

"Angela!" exclaimed Lady Primrose, but her daughter was still in Julian's arms when the Prince, followed by Doctor King, entered the room.

"Why, Colonel!" said the Prince lightly. "Then there is some reason for the delay in transmitting my message?"

"The Prince!" exclaimed Angela, and, as Julian's arms slackened about her, she dropped into the fullest of curtsies.

"Colonel," said Prince Charles, "I congratulate you. This charming lady can be none other than the Lady Angela of whom you have spoken?"

He held out his hand and raised Angela.

"Oh, sir, how can I thank you enough?" whispered Angela, her eyes bright. "You have acknowledged Julian's worth." She smiled from the Prince to Julian. "Colonel Brett." She caressed the words. "Colonel Julian Brett. . ."

Lady Primrose was forced to swallow her displeasure. What would be the outcome of all this she hesitated to think. Some interview had taken place between Angela, the Brett person and Arthur. Until she knew the exact purport of this she felt that she must let matters rest uneasily. Much more pressing difficulties had to be dealt with, and whatever foolishness had brought the Prince to Primrose House, the fact remained that he dare not be allowed to remain under her roof.

The Prince, on the other hand, seemed imbued with that same spirit of adventure as he had displayed during his flight through the Highlands. He loved the idea of this masquerade and already was talking gaily of his plans. First of all, he would consider the whole pros and cons of Lord Elibank's plot, though, as he said, he had but little liking for it. However, he did not intend to rush to conclusions. He had come to see for himself and to make a definite assessment of every possibility. For his own part, he had been carefully examining the plans of the fortifications of the Tower of London, and he had come to the conclusion that with a band of a hundred resolute men the fortress could easily be surprised and captured. Once the Stuart flag was flying over the White Tower the rest would be easy. The whole of London would rise in the Cause, the pulse of the Whig administration would be paralysed and the Hanovers driven into ignominious flight.

"Yes, yes," said Doctor King, and sought to humour the Prince. "Obviously there is much to be thought out, sir; but at this moment we are more worried with the personal safety of Your Royal Highness."

Lady Primrose began to unfold a plan. At the Fleet Bridge the Primroses

possessed a house. It was a fair and excellent building and they had kept it ready furnished and often used it as bachelors' quarters and an overflow for Essex Street. Moreover, Mrs. Boulter, the sister-in-law of her ladyship's own butler, had been placed in charge of the establishment. As it was impossible for the Prince to remain at Primrose House, would he agree to her strategy?

"Why, certainly, madam," said the Prince in the height of good humour; "so long as you leave me Colonel Brett as my companion I'll fall in with anything. Only I refuse to be turned out of London until I have seen matters for myself." The final sentence he spoke with considerable determination.

"Yes, sir," agreed Doctor King. "You must see for yourself, and Colonel Brett shall go with you and assist you in every possible way. I concur with Lady Primrose that the Fleet House has many advantages. It is off the beaten track, and it is in the centre of London. Your comings and goings from it are less likely to be noticed than they would be here, where we are unfortunately under constant observation. Moreover, should the worst come to the worst, the house at the Fleet Bridge backs on to the River Thames. And, sir, if you were hard pressed, it would be possible to make an embarkation on to a vessel and so reach safety."

"We will not think of that," declared the Prince. He looked at Julian. "What do you say to the suggestion, Brett?"

Julian hesitated. "Well, sir, if Doctor King thinks the plan a good one, we'd do best to fall in with it."

"Your Royal Highness," implored Angela, "please do as they say. You don't know how much your safety means to me."

The Prince quizzed her, and his charming smile came back again. "I do, Lady Angela, indeed I do; I am clever enough to realize that my safety means that of Colonel Brett, and I have the notion he's a very precious person."

Lady Primrose breathed a sigh of relief. She was glad that no difficulties had been made. The Fleet House—that was the solution! If the Prince went there . . . And if he liked the scallywag Brett, that was his own business. Besides, there were more reasons than one why she must have time to think. Arthur must be consulted, there must be a general conference in which Lord Westmorland, the Duke of Beaufort and the other adherents could be brought into consultation.

Angela and the Prince were talking together, and Julian was exchanging *sotto-voce* confidences with Doctor King. If only things could be arranged smoothly, but they must hurry. There was not a moment to lose, thought Lady Primrose. Her planning was interrupted by a surreptitious knock at the door.

"Yes?" she called, and, going quickly, herself opened the door.

Boulter was standing outside. He wore a worried look as he opened the ante-room door.

"Shall I serve supper, my lady?"

"Yes," ordered Lady Primrose. "Listen, Boulter, you must speak with his lordship. Tell him that supper is to be served immediately. He is to

make excuses for my non-appearance, but to be careful that they are vague. On no account is he to allow himself to be pinned to a point."

"Very good, my lady," said Boulter.

Lady Primrose closed the door and came back. "Your Royal Highness, please listen—all of you. Very shortly the guests will go in to supper, and the hall will be empty again. It is too dangerous for us to try and use the main entrance, but Colonel Brett"—the military title nearly choked her—"knows his way across the garden. The moment the coast is clear we must move quickly. I dare not order a conveyance, but the walk is not a long one. You will be able to undertake it, sir?"

The Prince looked at her in amusement. "My dear lady, do not disturb yourself. I can assure you I have walked a thousand miles and more for the sake of this Cause of ours."

From outside there came the hubbub of voices, and the sound of feet upon the marble pavement of the hall. Boulter had done the first part—the guests were going in to supper. They were laughing and talking amongst themselves, whispering scandal and frivolities, talking of their games upon the table, or the latest music of Maître Papillon. Bette Hilton was laughing extravagantly, and Mr. William Hogarth, the engraver, twittered excitedly to his wife. Lord Sandwich was bragging that luck would change with a full stomach, and Lord Portmore told how he had stripped a milliner at a guinea a garment. The murmur and the noise of movement began to decrease. Soon everything was silent, and Lady Primrose, peeping out, saw the hall was deserted.

"Come, sir," she whispered to the Prince. She beckoned to Julian and Doctor King.

With Lady Primrose leading and the Prince walking at her side, they went across the hall. Julian and Angela came next, walking hand in hand.

"You will be careful, darling. Please be careful. If anything should happen to you . . ."

"I know," said Julian, and lifting her hand he kissed it. "What a fate, you might even have to marry that awful Cooper!"

"Heaven forbid!" whispered Angela, her face grave. "I'd rather die, darling." But a moment later she was smiling bravely. Whatever her thoughts, Julian must see her at her best.

Lady Primrose led the way across the deserted drawing-room. She parted the curtains and pulled open a long window. The night was all that a summer night should be, and a half-moon gave enough light to show up the outlines of the garden.

"In such a night as this," whispered Angela.

Doctor King drew away from them. "I'll not play 'Wall' to two lovers," he said quietly.

The windows were now open, and Lady Primrose stepped out. The cool of the air made her shiver slightly, for she had no wrap upon her naked shoulders.

"Straight across the garden, sir," she directed the Prince. "Your companion is known to Mrs. Boulter, but I will also send word by another route. I have a servant I can trust to take the message."

"Thank you, madam," said the Prince. "I had hoped for a different welcome, but the hospitality you offer will have to do. Are you ready, Colonel?"

Julian bent and kissed Angela on the lips.

"Take care, my dear—oh, do take care," she whispered softly.

"Yes, sir," said Julian. "I am quite ready."

The Prince and Julian moved forward, and Lady Primrose, Doctor King and Angela watched them go. They heard the wicket-gate click and the faint whine as it swung upon its hinges. There came a second click as it was closed again.

"They're gone!" said Angela with a sob. "Pray God take care of them."

Lady Primrose interrupted, her voice strained. "Come, Angela! And you, Arnold. I condone nothing. What comes after must be decided, but it is the present that concerns us most. We've a part to play—all three of us. We must fool these Whigs and turn the laugh upon them." She turned about, and with Lady Angela and Doctor King following her, she made her way lightly across the drawing-room towards the Great Hall.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### THE STRANGE VISITATION

How the Primrose family had ever come to be possessed of a house at the Fleet Bridge was somewhat shrouded in mystery. Maybe one of the former Earls of Primrose might have come upon the property, bought it and used it to install one of his ladies. If that was true of a former Primrose, it was certainly an incorrect aspersion to place against the present holder of the title. Arthur Primrose had never, during the whole of his married life, had the pluck even to glance aside from his lady. But, nevertheless, the house at 'The Ditch' remained Primrose property, and during the troubles of the 'Forty-five it had evolved into considerable usefulness. In the first place, it backed on to the mouth of the Fleet river at the exact point where the tributary joined the Thames, and there were rumours that the secret passage which ran from the house to the gardens abutting the Quay had been used on several occasions for the benefit of Jacobite business.

For some unexplained reason the Fleet House had never aroused the suspicions of the pursuivants, and they appeared to be entirely unaware of its correct ownership.

Lord and Lady Primrose had shown some cleverness to this end, for they always kept at the house a person whom they could trust in all circumstances, and that occupier was responsible for paying rates and taxes and generally behaving as if the house was his or her own property. The present tenant was Mrs. Annie Boulter. She was a pleasant-faced woman in the

middle sixties and by status a widow. Her late lamented husband, the brother of the Primroses' major-domo, had been gardener at Primrose House for more than thirty years. He had first come from the Scottish property and taken up his position and had remained there in faithful service until a touch of 'Yellowjack' took him off with surprising rapidity. The death of the gardener coincided with the demise of the Primrose tenant at the Fleet, and what could be more easy than that Mrs. Boulter should be translated there, put on a pension and left for the outside world to admire as a comely widow with undoubted private means?

Prince Charles had heard all this story from Mrs. Boulter's own lips, and she for her part looked upon her visitors as being persons about whom she must not enquire too deeply into. She had had her business explained to her, and she knew what she must do under these circumstances. She must feed and look after such persons as Lord or Lady Primrose might send her. Nor was it any part of her duties to ask questions or be inquisitive.

To Mrs. Boulter this good-looking, grave young man who called himself the Count d'Albany might be anybody. So, for that matter, could be the young gentleman, Colonel Julian Brett, who was with him. The Count d'Albany certainly had an extreme likeness to a royal gentleman of whom she had heard much, and the fact that this Colonel Brett invariably called him 'sir' and occasionally let slip the title of 'Your Royal Highness' lent food for thought; but Mrs. Boulter's job was good food for stomachs and clean sheets for nicely aired beds.

The morning after their arrival from Primrose House Prince Charles and Julian Brett breakfasted late. They had sat up all hours talking, but now matters appeared to have arranged themselves. Contact had been made with Captain Trompe and the Prince's valise had duly arrived. Once possessed of this the Prince could change his clothes, whilst Mrs. Boulter used her flat-iron to such purpose that all creases were erased and he could turn himself out with his accustomed band-box appearance.

During the morning, to Julian's intense amazement, the Prince showed his inclination to take the air. He waved aside all protests and refused to look upon this as being in the slightest foolhardy. Mrs. Boulter was to be told that they would be back to take dinner at three o'clock in the afternoon. Julian could hardly bring himself to share these views, but he had had so little experience of monarchs or their eldest sons that he failed to produce an argument to stop the expedition.

They left the Fleet and strolled up Sea-Coal Lane towards the Lud Gate. Here they turned eastwards and walked briskly up towards St. Paul's. The Prince admired the stately pile and looked knowingly at Julian.

"Those who curse the Stuarts forget that it was a Stuart who gave his backing to Sir Christopher Wren," he said, and repeated almost word for word the arguments of Doctor King.

Julian agreed, but he could not for the life of him think that the somewhat ungodly London of 1750 could be swayed into a change of kingship on the question of church architecture.

They made towards Cheapside, and as they walked the Prince unfolded his plans. He had an idea that a bold stroke could paralyse the whole of the



Hanoverian regime. He had thought much about the mob, and he knew that the London mob was an instrument which, if it could be used in the proper manner, could bring about the fall of any government. Moreover, he appeared to have an idea that all such people as highwaymen, gentlemen adventurers and soldiers of fortune were only awaiting an opportunity to unsheath their swords and gain great and abundant fortunes in the Stuart Cause.

As they passed by the shops of Cheapside and looked in at their prosperous display of wares Julian wondered whether this was logic. England was so rapidly becoming a land of commerce, and the traders who owned these emporiums were much more likely to look to their own pockets than to debate the rights and wrongs of succession. He did not know how he could explain this change of heart to His Royal Highness, so he left matters as they were and made a good audience for the Prince's plans. One thing relieved Julian: though they passed through throngs of people throughout the whole route, nobody turned to look upon them for a second time.

The Prince had a mind to walk to Tower Hill, and when they arrived there, and stood upon the very piece of grass where so much of the noblest blood in Britain had poured forth in the Stuart Cause, the Prince pointed down at the grim grey fortress. There were no signs of military activity, and the only evidence of any soldiery was a lethargic sentry, who rested his arms on his musket before his sentry-box at the Postern Gate.

"With a hundred resolute men we could surprise and capture that fortress," said the Prince vehemently. "And what is more, we could hold it against all comers. The Stuart Ensign would fly from the White Tower, and once it was hoisted there the London mob would declare in our favour. The Tower, instead of being the stronghold of King George, would be the rallying-point of King James. We could have gallopers ready to ride north, east, south and west to spread the news. The faint hearts who are fearful of grasping those ten thousand muskets I have bought for them would be faint-hearted no longer." He dropped his voice. "Listen to me, Colonel Brett; the Hanovers are already flirting with Spain, and that throws them at variance with France. Maria Theresa of Austria is tired of being reminded of British charity. King George thinks more of Hanover than he does of Britain. A British king for Britain, that is what I say. A British king for Britain!" The Prince doffed his hat and waved it enthusiastically.

A party of apprentices who were fooling about the green in their usual unruly manner regarded the Prince's action with some amusement. They obviously thought that the gentleman who waved his hat was light in the head, for they put significant fingers to the sides of their temples and burst into fresh peals of laughter.

"A British king for Britain!" cried Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and waved his hat in a more generous sweep. "The White Rose for ever, Colonel Brett. The White Rose shall bloom again!"

Julian did not answer, for he felt considerably moved by the Prince's words and gestures. But not the apprentices, for they were approaching with an eye to interfering. They did not reckon with Julian, for, reaching out with his cane, he caught the largest of them a resounding whack across the

buttocks, which sent the youth howling in retreat, and his mates, considering that discretion was the better part of valour, went with him.

"Well done!" said the Prince, and laughed. "A good omen. These menials of commercial Hanover are already sent into retreat. Well done, Colonel!" He walked across to the edge of the green and stood gazing down at the Tower, talking of the possibilities of stretching scaling-ladders across the moat.

. . . . .

Whilst Prince Charles Stuart and Julian Brett were surveying the Tower of London and walking abroad in the streets of the City, Mr. Pelham, Prime Minister to His Majesty King George II, was sitting in the library of his Downing Street house and contemplating the affairs of the world in a very disgruntled frame of mind. Troubles had heaped upon him. He felt himself more than an injured man. First, the King was in a difficult and hypersensitive mood, and the breach between His Majesty and Frederick, the Hanoverian Prince of Wales, was growing daily. The cause of the trouble was one Bub Doddington, Baron of Melcombe Regis. This nobleman had suddenly resigned his position in the Government to espouse the cause of Prince Frederick, and now the fat was in the fire with a vengeance. King George held his court at St. James's Palace and the Prince of Wales his at Leicester House. These two assemblies were vying with each other, and their daily friction all resolved upon the Prime Minister. That was not all: other complications had set in. His Grace the Duke of Bedford was paying tremendous attention to Lady Yarmouth, who, as everybody knew, was the King's mistress. Now, the fact that a Duke and a Minister of the Crown, such as Bedford was, preferred to gain his favours 'on top of the blanket' had brought repercussions from the Princess Amelia and her brother, the Duke of Cumberland. These royal personages desired that Bedford should summarily be dismissed, whilst His Grace the Duke of Newcastle stood steadfastly to the opinion that at all costs Bedford must remain inside the Cabinet.

Mr. Pelham shook his head wearily. He was beginning to wonder whether the 'Broad Bottom' Administration had a bottom quite as broad as was required to hold so many divergent opinions.

A servant knocked quietly at the door and was bidden to enter. He brought the news that the Earl of Cooper had come at the Prime Minister's summons to call upon him.

"Send him in, Coxhead," snapped Mr. Pelham, and straightening the papers on his desk, waved away a secretary and prepared to receive the Solicitor-General.

William Cooper looked very apprehensive as he entered the library, and the fact that his chief did not ask him to be seated confirmed his suspicion.

"Cooper," said Mr. Pelham, rustling a pink-taped sheaf of papers ominously, "the Young Pretender left Flushing in Holland three days ago. I have reason to believe that he is at present in England and probably in London. What have you to say about that, sir?"

Cooper tried to bluff. He was amazed at such information. He could not believe the veracity of it. Who was the Prime Minister's informant?

Pelham shrugged his shoulders. The Minister at The Hague had sent a special despatch. . . . Mr. Pelham untied the pink tape and consulted the first of the documents. The informant had been the proprietor of the Orange Gasthof. On the strength of this information from this worthy Hanoverian a Jew named Isaac Leah had been apprehended, threatened with torture as was still existent under the Dutch Laws, and had confessed that he had assisted an Englishman of the name of Julian Brett.

"Julian Brett," said Cooper, and licked his lips like a hungry wolf who had smelt meat for the first time in months.

"You know him?" asked Pelham with some surprise.

"Yes, sir," said Cooper. "This person was in the employ of the Primroses. I sent a letter to you some time ago suggesting that we should waive the Habeas Corpus and arrest him forthwith for subversive activities. You will remember that Brett was also connected with the bringing of Clementina Walkinshaw into England."

The Prime Minister drew his hand wearily across his forehead. Only that morning he had been summoned to St. James's Palace and had heard His Majesty's views upon the entire Walkinshaw affair. There had been a recapitulation of the royal views upon the subject, and Mr. Pelham had been instructed to intimate at once to Leicester House that the young woman should be packed off bag and baggage. What the King said was one thing and what the Princess of Wales was likely to do was completely another. H.M. Prime Minister had reason to know this to his cost. And, besides, there was Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his friend Bub Doddington to be reckoned with, and the slightest display of autocratic powers on the part of the Crown would bring forth a spirited remonstrance in Parliament.

"Yes," said Pelham in a tired voice. "You sent me a letter, you say? I can't remember that I ever received it." He made a gesture towards his untidy desk. "I receive so many letters. Who do you say brought it? That clerk of yours? Anyway, you had better arrest Brett. Do you know where he is?"

Cooper said lamely that he did not. He had reason to believe that Brett had been at Primrose House on the previous night. He personally had not come in contact with him, but he also understood, according to Lord Primrose, that Brett had been dismissed for incompetence.

"Lack of manners, surely," said the Prime Minister viciously. "I hear he was rude enough to tweak the sword out of the Solicitor-General's hand and punch him on the jaw. William, my dear fellow, when will you learn that the pen is mightier than the sword?" He looked keenly at Cooper. "How's that business between you and Lady Angela Primrose going?"

"It isn't going at all," said Cooper.

"I'm glad to hear that," agreed Pelham. "How'd it be if we were to arrest Lord Primrose forthwith, and put Doctor King in the Tower of London alongside of him? There'll be an outcry, but I'll stand by you."

Cooper demurred. While there was life there was hope, and he did not

wish to see his chances of obtaining the Primrose broad acres disappear for ever.

"Well?" said Mr. Pelham. "I can't read your thoughts. What do you want to do?"

Lord Cooper sighed. "I think, sir, we must find Brett. After all, London is not too large a place for my pursuivants to comb. If we once find him, I am pretty certain that the Young Pretender won't be far away."

Mr. Pelham agreed. "Have it your own way," he grunted. "But all the same, watch that girl Angela Primrose. You're not my only source of information, and from what I hear"—he watched to see the effect of his words—"... from what I hear, Lady Angela has been setting her cap at the handsome Brett, and my Lord Cooper may have had a clip on the jaw for more reasons than one."

Mr. Pelham had a way of finishing interviews and not listening to the remonstrances of his subordinates. Cooper was flushed and angry and a hundred retorts and explanations quivered on his lips, but the Prime Minister waved him away with one hand and rang the hand-bell on his table with the other.

"All right, William, all right! Arrest Brett, I agree with you. That is the obvious thing to do. To hell with Habeas Corpus!" He raised his voice sufficiently for the servant who entered to catch his words. "Show Lord Cooper out," he ordered, and sighed expressively when his lordship had gone.

Lord Cooper quitted Downing Street and turned into Whitehall. He walked along morosely, taking no notice of those of his cronies who greeted him, and ploughed onwards into the Strand.

"Cooper's in a bad temper," said a young blood, who was left hat in hand.

His fair companion giggled. "So they say," she lisped. "I bet he's had the rough side of Mr. Pelham's tongue this morning." She squeezed her companion's arm as they turned to look at the retreating Solicitor-General. "They say Lady Angela Primrose treats him vilely and keeps her father out of gaol at the same time."

Cooper strode eastwards, his thoughts in a maze, and he wondered what he had better do for the best. Certainly Mr. Pelham was in no mood for any further failures. He had recognized the rasp in the Prime Minister's voice, and that foreboded danger for his political aspirations. Was the Prince in London? This news from Holland certainly was disconcerting, and as he analysed in his own mind the happenings of the night before he realized much circumstantial evidence to support the assertion. For the first part of the evening Lady Angela had avoided him. That had been up to the moment of his extremely unpleasant interview with Lord Primrose. But after that there had come a complete change of front. At supper Angela had sat next to him. Her conversation had been vivacious and sparkling.

He reached the Temple Bar, turned into Mitre Court, and made his way to his Chambers in the Temple. His first idea had been to go to the Law offices, but secondary consideration made him think that he could deal with this matter better in the privacy of his own quarters. There was the matter of the letter to be settled up. Damn the fellow Johnson!

He entered the porch of his Chambers and went up the stairs. Johnson came forward to meet him.

"Did you deliver that letter to the Prime Minister?" demanded Cooper.

Johnson lied nimbly. "Why, yes, my lord. Not into his own hand, but into the hands of one of his servants," he lisped. "I am always most careful with your lordship's correspondence."

"Are you?" said Cooper doubtfully. "If I find you telling lies, I'll skin you alive, do you hear?"

Johnson shivered, because he felt that his lordship might for once keep his word.

"Jem Pringle, the pursuivant, is here, sir," he volunteered, adroitly changing the topic of conversation.

"Good," said Cooper. "Where is he? In the library?"

"Yes, my lord," said Johnson, and opened the door for his patron to enter.

. . . . .

Whilst Lord Cooper interviewed Jem Pringle and gave him his orders, at a distance less than a mile away Prince Charles Edward Stuart and Colonel Julian Brett were casually walking from St. Paul's to the Lud Gate. The sun had come out and the day was bright and colourful. His Royal Highness, now his military conversations were completed, found time to admire the ladies of the city. And they in return were equally keen to give a bright eye, a friendly smile or show a trim ankle to this fine-looking fellow who was so open in his glances towards them.

"Women! Women! Women!" exclaimed the Prince. "You know, Brett, they are the nicer side of all the devilry of this world. But what devils they can be!" He brought the conversation back to a previous topic. "So you fell in love with Lady Angela Primrose, did you?"

Julian nodded his head. "Yes, sir. How could I do otherwise?"

The Prince sighed. "Yes, I suppose you're right. But if love laughs at locksmiths, does it shrug its shoulders at dowries as well? Have you a fortune to offer Lady Angela? She bears a great name, Colonel, and comes from proud stock."

"We have discussed that matter," said Julian earnestly. "She realizes that I have nothing save what my own labour can produce, but she is content." He smiled sheepishly. "I think, sir, though it is of small compliment to myself, she considers me a pleasing alternative to the Earl of Cooper."

"There my lady shows a great deal of common sense," agreed Prince Charles. "I only wish that I had something to give the pair of you in shape of a dowry."

"But you will, sir," said Julian quickly. "At any moment success will be yours, and then—why, sir, I for one would not question your generosity."

"Well said, Brett. Very well said." The Prince grew silent and one of those fleeting fits of moroseness came upon him. A moment before he had been happy and carefree, but now he looked as if the cares of a thousand years were upon his shoulders. "Did I do right to come here, Colonel Brett?"

These plans of mine—these ideas that I have told you—can we ever put them into action? So far the Primroses have hustled me into hiding; Doctor King could not have looked more scared if he had seen the devil himself. Where are all these Jacobite lords? Where are all these firm friends of the Stuart Cause? I have come to see for myself, yet what have I seen? Nothing . . . nothing save the Tower of London with another standard flying above it, and pot-bellied citizens, who rake in the shekels."

Julian could give no answer to these fears, nor did the Prince expect him to do so. Rather it was that Prince Charles spoke his thoughts aloud, and almost expected the stones of London to answer him.

"Tell me, Brett," he said suddenly, "when you were in Flushing you told me you went to Scotland. You stayed in the house of Hughie Paterson?"

"Yes, sir."

The Prince stroked his chin, and seemed to be in difficulty of bringing himself to ask the next question. At last he put it.

"In the house of Sir Hugh, did you come upon a lady—Clementina Walkinshaw?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then perhaps, Colonel Brett, you will tell me something. I have heard that Miss Walkinshaw has entered England. My latest information is that she is resting with friends near Derby." He stopped speaking, for the word 'Derby' had brought a painful memory to him. "Do you know anything of this?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Julian quickly, for now there was no need to cloak the part that he had played. He told the story briefly, starting with the episode of the woman sobbing in that house at Bannockburn and of the strange young gentleman who joined his company through the agency of old Kerr of Ferniehurst at Jedburgh. When he had finished the Prince pursed his lips.

"Do you know," he said, "why Miss Walkinshaw came into England? Do you know why they kept her prisoner in Hughie Paterson's house? Then let me tell you. When I was in Scotland, and when I tried to reform my demoralized army at Glasgow, she alone of all the youth and beauty of Scotland gave me the sympathy I needed. They say that she became my mistress—well, let them say what they will. I know the truth of it. But I gave her my word and she gave her word back to me. Do you not see how my hands are tied? I cannot send a word to Clementina Walkinshaw, I cannot fulfil my promise to her until . . . No, I must not say that. What was that I said about women? Women—women! They are the nicer side of all the devilry of this world. But what devils they can be!" He sighed and became moody again.

They had reached the corner of Sea-Coal Lane and turned towards the Fleet Ditch. A new cargo of coal had come by sea from the north, and begrimed porters with baskets on their shoulders were making their way with lurching gait over the cobbles.

"Hi! Look where you're going, man!" challenged Julian, as one of them came barging against the Prince.

The fellow looked up, groused out an imprecation and went stumbling on his way.

The Prince bit his lip. "No, Colonel, don't chide them. They are what George of Hanover has made them—slaves of commerce first and loyal subjects after."

Mrs. Boulter's dinner had been ready half an hour since, and she wondered what could have taken the gentlemen. She confided to Mab Stokes, the woman who came in to help, that if the gentlemen did not come quickly the fine capon she had roasted would be no more than a cinder.

"Quality?" asked Mab Stokes inquisitively.

Mrs. Boulter treated her to a severe look. "Mind your own business and keep your mouth shut," she admonished. "I don't ask any questions, and no more should you."

"As you like it," said Mrs. Stokes subserviently. Her husband was a coal-heaver who worked at The Ditch, and she had been so well beaten in her lifetime to become more than humble at the merest suggestion of a harsh word.

"And you keep in the kitchen," snapped Mrs. Boulter, setting her black silk gown to rights and smoothing her apron and cuffs. "They don't want to see the likes of you, and I don't want you to see the likes of them."

"There's no accounting for tastes," said Mrs. Stokes with an unusual display of spirit.

Mrs. Boulter turned quickly from the mirror, caught her help-mate a box over the ears which compared favourably with that of the coal-heaver, and went bustling upstairs to answer the door.

The Prince and Julian dined in the upper room. The chicken was not burnt to a cinder and the vegetables were fresh cooked, sauced and spiced. While they ate, Mrs. Boulter, who served them, let drop morsels of information. She had heard, for instance, that Lord Cooper, the Solicitor-General, was in a fine to-do with Mr. Pelham, and she whispered naively that she thought she had the reason of it. A young lady of the name of Clementina Walkinshaw—Miss Clementina Walkinshaw, who was all mixed up with the Young Pretender at Glasgow—or some such place—had come to stay with her sister, Catherine Walkinshaw, at no other place but Leicester House. Mrs. Boulter refused to see a warning expression in Julian's face, and continued to gossip. Yes, and there was more, too. They said that the invitation came from the Hanoverian Princess of Wales her very self; and, indeed, that must be true, for how else could a person so incriminated with the Stuart Cause have come into the midst of this royal Hanoverian household? Mrs. Boulter shook her head. To her way of thinking there was more than met the eye, and that was saying something. She could not imagine those Hanovers doing anything unless they had the better of the deal.

Julian watched the effects of this information upon the Prince, but he betrayed no outward sign. He treated the whole as the most casual gossip, and if Mrs. Boulter had been fishing for a reaction she was doomed to disappointment.

"Another piece of apple pie?" she invited.

The Prince shook his head. He assured her that he had eaten excellently. He complimented her on her cooking, and made the suggestion that he would like to walk through into the Snug and there rest himself awhile. He rose to his feet, and with Julian hastening to open the door for him he

left the room. The moment he had gone Julian turned fiercely upon Mrs. Boulter.

"Why did you say that?" he demanded.

Mrs. Boulter shrugged her ample shoulders. "Why, Colonel Brett, it was a bit of gossip, and I handed it on. The poor gentleman looked so bored, I thought a bit of spicing might bring a smile to his lips. The Count d'Albany—that's a foreign name, isn't it?—being new to this town of ours, might like to hear what's going on."

"Are you sure that's all?" demanded Julian tersely.

Mrs. Boulter shook her head innocently. "Cross my heart, and if I never speak another word. There goes the door again. If you'll excuse me, Colonel Brett—it doesn't do to keep people waiting too long on the doorstep." She disappeared and her footsteps sounded heavily on the stairs.

Julian stood listening. Certainly this was the strangest business. He still did not believe that Mrs. Boulter's remarks about Miss Walkinshaw were entirely artless. This guise of the Count d'Albany was too thin.

"The Reverend Doctor King to see you, sir," announced Mrs. Boulter. Doctor King came forward and grasped Julian's hand.

"Where is he?" he asked.

Julian nodded towards the Snug door.

"He cannot overhear what we say?"

Julian shook his head. "No, the door is very thick."

"Listen to me, Julian. Matters are not going very well. Westmorland, the Duke of Beaufort and the rest of them have been to Primrose House. We had an interview this morning, and Lord Primrose told them what had happened."

"Do they know that the Prince is here?"

"Not actually. But we have said as much. I have asked them all to show their hand—I have stressed that we must have action, that this cannot go on indefinitely. Either we fight for the Crown and uphold our Prince as the Viceroy of the legal King, or else . . ." Doctor King's voice trailed off.

"But what have they decided?" asked Julian earnestly. "Surely my lords will come and see the Prince? They cannot allow him to be in London and send him away like an unwanted guest?"

Doctor King hesitated. He did not tell much of the interview that had taken place that morning, but Julian realized that it had been heavy going. Beaufort, Westmorland and Primrose had talked a great deal. Frankly, they admitted they were not ready to rise.

"But you've lied to him for years. Ever since the 'Forty-five the White Rose of England and Scotland has sent continuous messages—they have told him and his Royal Father a hundred times that at any moment they would be ready, that the crown is within their grasp, that the whole country will rise on his side if he will give the word. You cannot blame him if he has come here to see for himself. It is your doing."

Doctor King walked across to the window. He looked down into Sea-Coal Lane and watched the toiling line of navvies waddling duckwise with



their loaded skips of coal. He saw the women at their daily tasks and the children playing, begrimed but happy, in the street.

"Look, Julian," he said, "that is England and that is Peace. Those poor devils haven't much else but a leaky roof above their heads, a belly full of bread and a penn'orth of gin to send them senseless to forget their troubles. But, all the same, these scant blessings are security. If another Rising was to come again, those gutters would not be full of refuse and coal-dust, but of human blood."

The door opened and, unseen by Julian and Doctor King, Prince Charles came quietly into the room.

"Gentlemen!" he said sharply. "I do not ask you to repeat what you have said. God knows, a listener never hears good of himself."

"Your servant, sir," said Doctor King, and bowed.

"That I would almost doubt."

Doctor King hesitated. "I bring you a message from His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, sir—the Earl of Westmorland, Lord Elibank, Lord Graham, the Earl of Primrose and Sir Charles Cochrane."

"Elibank," said the Prince quietly. "Well, at least, of all this ruck he has a plan. Which is better, to cut throats or to break hearts?"

Doctor King bowed and politely ignored this forthright remark. "Their lordships would attend upon you here, sir."

"Here?" said the Prince, and a frown came to his forehead. "Has the Royal Stuart to hide under a coal-tip to give Court to his followers?"

"Your Royal Highness, Primrose House is watched. For you to go there would be madness. The other lords report that they have pursuivants in constant vigil on their dwellings. Can we come to see you here, sir?"

"Yes," said the Prince shortly. "I have waited long enough and an hour or two more will not matter much." He turned on his heel and walked briskly out of the room.

"Do you understand his feelings?" asked Julian.

Doctor King bowed his head. "His feelings are mine and yours, Julian. What else can I say? I have no whip to drive the consciences of these Jacobite lords. Perhaps he can."

The doctor picked up his hat, which he had placed upon the table, and made his preparations to leave. "An old priest can walk about the streets of London and not arouse much comment," he said thoughtfully. "But, nevertheless, I came very carefully here. Yes, by river—it was better that way. These Hanoverian pursuivants have the habits of rats and a dislike of water."

"Have you no news of Angela?" asked Julian. "Did she send me no word?"

They moved from the room and started to go down the stairs together.

"She sent you her love. She will take no harm where she is, Julian. Primrose House is too distraught with other considerations to force her against her will."

"I am glad of that. At least we have our small mercies. Would it be possible for me to see her?"

Doctor King shook his head. "That would be madness. Remember, this fellow Cooper is no fool."

The doctor took his leave and Julian, standing in the doorway, watched him go slowly up Sea-Coal Lane. He made a pleasant picture in his clerical garb, exchanging a word here and there with the coalmen, patting a child upon the head and thrusting a halfpenny into a grimy palm. Julian closed the door and came up the stairs. The Prince was not in the dining-room; he wondered if he should disturb him. But second thoughts were best, and he threw himself down into a chair.

Darkness did not come until late in the evening, but Mrs. Boulter, prewarned of the coming of company, appeared in good time to shut the case-ment and draw the curtains against inquisitive eyes. Half an hour later the Prince emerged from his chamber. He was wearing a semi-Court dress, with the star of St. Andrew twinkling on his left breast.

"Well, Brett," he greeted, "here I am, and I'll put as brave a face upon it as I can. Here, let's drink a glass of wine!" He took the stopper from a decanter which stood upon the table and filled two glasses. "Your health, Brett, and the health of Lady Angela—and the Cause, the Sacred Cause." He set down his glass. "Now, Colonel, I am ready to meet and argue with my adherents."

The Jacobite lords came singly. The first to appear was the bluff Westmorland, and hard on his heels came Beaufort, with Elibank after him. Sir Charles Cochrane was next, and after him Doctor King. Lord Graham was five minutes late, and five minutes after him appeared the Earl of Primrose to greet the Prince effusively, and Julian with sour look.

"Well, my lords," said Prince Charles, "let's get to it. What have you to say?" He motioned for them to sit at the long polished dining-table, and took his own place at its head. The candles flickered and their light shone upon the faces of their lordships.

Julian alone had no place, and in his position as aide-de-camp to the Prince he stood immediately behind the royal chair. "A poor lot," he thought. It was better that the Prince should come and see for himself.

The conference began. The Prince explained his views upon the Tower of London and on the use of the mob and those ten thousand muskets. But outside these statements he could draw no larger picture. The whole scheme seemed drab and uninspiring.

Their lordships wanted to know about France, the position in Europe and the chances of Austria engaging herself against Germany and Hanover whilst France sent aid to the Stuart Cause.

"Your Royal Highness, we must be definite," implored the Duke of Beaufort.

But the Prince could not be definite. Everything depended upon something else. If the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was torn into pieces, France might materially assist the Cause. If the Hanovers threw in their lot with Spain, Austria would automatically become their enemy. For two hours they talked, and the candles burnt low in their holders. The Prince wanted action; he was willing to lay down his life for the Cause. Their

lordships pledged that they were equally willing to lay down their lives, but words were all that passed across that table. There was no definite plan or undertaking on either side.

At last the Prince summed up the situation.

"My lords, I thank you in the name of my father for your loyalty to the Cause. I also compliment you for your good sense. You have come here with one stern intention—may I put it in a nutshell? Yes, my lords, you are decided amongst yourselves, whatever happens you will not lose your heads, though through this common-sense decision my father may lose the Crown of his forefathers."

The interview was over. There was a murmur of protest, but their lordships had brought this stricture upon themselves. They rose to their feet, and Julian went to fling open the door.

"What will you do now, sir?" asked the Duke of Beaufort.

The Prince eyed him evenly. "You forget, Your Grace, that I am a Stuart, and I still have the Divine Right of Kings. Therefore I alone shall decide my future."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### THE HEART OF A PRINCE

JEM PRINGLE admitted savagely that he had drawn a complete and absolute blank. His pursuivants, he declared, had been here, there and everywhere and not a sight or sound had they had of the miscreant Brett.

Lord Cooper received the news glumly, and Pringle's further information that Lady Angela Primrose had not quitted Primrose House throughout the whole of the previous day or night did not appear to help matters.

"Give us time" said Pringle. "Give us time, my lord, and we'll get 'em in the neck, the pair of them."

Cooper glowered. His faith in the ability of Jem Pringle was becoming sadly strained, and the attitude of Downing Street towards his own efforts was increasingly unpleasant.

"What about that woman at Leicester House, my lord?" asked Pringle. "Don't you think the Prince will go to her in the end? *Cherchez la femme*, they say in French, don't they, my lord?"

"You keep your place and stick to English," ordered Cooper, but he realized that Pringle had spoken a certain amount of truth. He wondered if the Princess of Wales had been more far-seeing than His Majesty's Cabinet and if she had brought Clementina Walkinshaw under her roof for a set purpose. It was a difficult matter to burst in upon a royal establishment and arrest a person under its protection, but he would dearly have loved to

place Clementina under lock and key. He cogitated for a moment, and made up his mind. He called for his hat and coat, which the obedient Johnson brought him, and sent the clerk hustling off to bring his coach to the door. He would ride in style and call upon the Prime Minister. He felt he must do something to restore his fallen fortunes, and a little display on his part would not come amiss. He turned to the waiting Pringle.

"Listen, you, Jem, keep your eye on Leicester House. I have an idea that the bee goes to the flower."

"Yes, my lord," said Pringle with alacrity, and, thankful to escape from the presence, darted to the door.

"And don't you make a bungle of this, either," shouted Lord Cooper after him, forgetting his usually faultless grammar in the stress of the moment.

Five minutes later the coach was waiting and his lordship took his seat in it. They rumbled along and reached the Strand, and, leaning forward, Cooper cast a malevolent glance at the stately pile of Primrose House. If only he could bring that young filly Angela to heel! But then, if he hanged this fellow Brett, matters would probably solve themselves. He drove on and wondered just what sort of reception Mr. Pelham had in store for him. He could imagine the outcry there would be when the news got about that the Walkinshaw woman had been arrested whilst staying at Leicester House.

Lady Angela Primrose was in the garden of Primrose House when Lord Cooper's coach went down the Strand. She saw it and carefully hid herself behind a shrub until it had passed. She tiptoed across the lawn and put her head through the library window. Lady Primrose was sitting at a desk and writing diligently.

"Mother," whispered Angela, "Cooper's just gone by—I saw him in his coach, and I'll bet he's on his way to see Mr. Pelham with another devilry he's thought up."

Lady Primrose put down her pen and beckoned for Angela to come to her. Angela went to the side door, opened it and hurried to her mother's side.

"You heard what happened last night?" said Lady Primrose.

Angela nodded. "Their lordships would do nothing. Poor Prince!"

"Yes, that's how it is, Angela. Their lordships cannot move. The Prince has come here on a forlorn hope. At least he has learnt the truth.

"But what happens now?" asked Angela. "Mother, he cannot stay here."

"I know," said Lady Primrose. "And it needs a woman's wit to think that problem out. Listen, my dear. You know why I sent him to the Fleet Ditch. . . . There is a wharf close by, and should a boat lie off there it would be in the normal event of commerce." Her voice became edged. "This girl Evans of yours. We can trust her?"

"Yes, Mama."

"Then we must use her. I have great fears for the Prince's safety. Sooner or later somebody will say a word too much or do a foolish thing, and if he were captured a hundred heads would fall. Do you understand me?"

She took up the letter she was writing and sealed it carefully. "I want Evans to go to the Billingsgate Fish Market. There is a tavern called the 'Neptune' which lies on the east side of the Tower Moat. She must find a Dutch captain called Trompe and give him this letter. Tell her to be careful

and at all costs to avoid being overlooked. . . . Trompe. Do you understand?" She unlocked a drawer and pulled it open. She took out a money-bag and cascaded a heap of guineas on to the desk. Carefully she counted out a hundred of them. "One hundred guineas, Angela. That is the fee that Trompe will want. I have told him in my letter that the Count d'Albany wishes to return to Holland, that he is to bring his eel-boat up to the Fleet Ditch and moor it there. To put a stop to questions, he is to send his men ashore with orders to sell their eels to all the passers-by. The Dutch have a right to do this by Charter granted to them by King Charles II. Provided this fellow Trompe continues the normal marketing of his wares he won't arouse suspicion. Tell Evans to go at once, and quickly. The Neptune Inn. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Mama."

Angela took the letter and the guineas and left the room. Upstairs, Evans was diligently goffering petticoats and received her instructions in her phlegmatic Scots manner.

"You needn't worry, my lady, I'll never speak a word where it isn't necessary."

"That's good. Away with you, Evans, and take care what you do."

Evans disappeared and Angela walked listlessly about her room. All this talk of the Prince was well enough, but what would happen to Julian? She fervently wished that she could go to the Fleet Ditch. If only she could speak to him for a little while and tell him that in spirit she was with him every moment of the day! If only she could write him a little missive and send it to him! She moved to the window and looked thoughtfully out. Two men, obviously pursuivants, were loitering in the roadway, but for all their show of indolence and lack of interest they were keeping a strict watch upon the house. Could Evans manage these two men? Suppose she was to call her back, dress herself as a maid and take the message herself? That was a better idea! If her maid allowed that letter or the money to fall into the hands of Cooper's men the danger would be tremendous. She went quickly to the door and along the corridor which led to the servants' quarters.

Evans was in her room and fortunately alone. Angela burst in upon her and told her quickly what she must do.

"Strip yourself, girl, and give me your clothes."

The amazed Evans did as she was bidden, and helped Angela into her garments. These were nothing like the right size, for Evans was broad and buxom and Lady Angela elegant and slim. But a good deal of pinning finally made the servants' habit look trim and pleasing upon her.

"Give me the money and the note," ordered Lady Angela, and, taking it, thrust it into her saccue.

"Yes, my lady," agreed Evans; "and may I get dressed, please?"

"Yes," said Angela quickly. "But keep out of sight. I had forgotten, it is you who are carrying the message, not me. No one must know that you and I have changed places."

"Certainly, my lady," said Evans breathlessly. "Anything to please you, my lady—anything."

A moment later, Angela had gone from the room and down the landing.

There was nobody about on the back stairs and she whisked past the open kitchen door so quickly that even Mrs. Weelands, who called out, had no chance of knowing who was there. Once out in the yard, she breathed a sigh of relief. She undid the lattice gate and slipped through into the road.

The pursuivants displayed a casual interest.

Angela was drawing closer to them, and the first man made a movement to intercept her. "Where you going, lass?" he demanded. "In a devil of a hurry, aren't you?"

Angela tossed her head. "I'm going to see a fellow who would knock your heads together and sense into them at the same time." She roughened her speech to keep in tone with her maid's dress.

"And break your heart into the bargain—if he don't break something else."

The pursuivants laughed coarsely at the jest.

"Not so fast, young woman," growled the larger of the two. "We be officers of the law and enquiring into certain matters which concerns the King's Peace. Where are you going in all this hurry, I'd like to know?" He grabbed out and seized Angela by the wrist, pulling her towards him so that she landed with a thud against his chest. "Now then, steady, lass," he admonished thickly.

Angela reached up and caught the man a slap across his face which made his teeth rattle. The blow was unexpected and knocked him off his balance, and to free her arm she bit him smartly in the wrist and with such force as to make him let go his grasp with a howl of pain.

"Hellcat—I'll . . ."

The second man lurched towards Angela and tried to seize her in his arms, but she was too quick for him. She ducked away beneath, and, picking up her skirts, ran helter-skelter down Essex Street with the two pursuivants in full cry after her.

"Stop in the King's name!" they shouted. "Stop her in the name of the King!"

Angela had a fair start of them and both fellows had been drinking, so that their wind was broken before they began the chase. She was a hundred yards ahead when she turned into the Strand, and their shouts for aid had deteriorated into gasps.

Angela ran onwards, and thanked her stars that she had not allowed Evans to carry the errand. For, though the girl was trustworthy, she hesitated to think what she would have done in an emergency such as this. Not until she reached the shadow of Temple Bar did she stop running, and then only because she felt she was attracting attention. Fleet Street was bathed in pleasant summer sunlight and any undue hurry was completely out of keeping with the scene. She slackened her pace to a brisk walk and made some efforts to set her dress and cap to rights.

"What's all the hurry, missy?" asked a friendly voice, and turning Angela saw a carrier's cart had drawn abreast with her.

"Why, sir, because I'm pressed for time." She smiled hopefully. "I should have been at Billingsgate half an hour ago to see about a friend of mine who's putting to sea."

The carrier chuckled and reined in his horses. "Jump in, lass. I'm for the Minories myself, but time and tide waits for no man—nor woman neither, as the saying goes. Never let it be said Tom Price didn't help a lass catch her lad afore the tide took him away to sea." He saw Angela hesitate, and reassured her. He was a married man and no man loved his wife and four children better than he did. She climbed up on the board beside him.

Tom Price clucked to his horses, Peg and Patience, and off they went down Fleet Street at a fine rate. For once the Lud Gate was not crowded and they started up the incline towards St. Paul's without a halt. The carrier was a talker, and if he was not chirruping to his horses he was regaling his passenger with an ample description of himself. He was a Welshman, but had lived in Newbury for long enough. Things were not too good in Wales, so he had left his native soil, same as the Tudors had done, to find something better in England. Yes, and he'd picked himself a wife from good Berkshire stock, and she had borne him two boys and two girls, who were the finest children in the length and breadth of the county. A nice carrying trade he had into the bargain—with mixed produce to bring to London, and fish, and one thing and another, to take out to the county gentry and such as could afford it. He was glad there were so many Catholics and High Church because they ate fish, and even if they kept their beliefs carefully hidden, they didn't their fish-eating habits. He ended his soliloquy to look sideways at Angela.

"Listen, lass. What about this talk of Bonnie Prince Charlie coming back again? Have you heard of it?"

Angela answered lamely that she'd heard a whisper, and that the Tory gentry would give him a hearty welcome when he did come. But there was one rumour and another and she had not troubled her head unduly about it.

"That's right," agreed the carrier. "Listen to me, friend. Kings are queer creatures, always fighting amongst themselves. That would be fine enough if they kept their squabbles to themselves, but they don't. They bring nations and peoples up and down with them." He became thoughtful. "King James may have a better right to the crown than what King George has, but that isn't for the likes of you and me to decide. We're the common people, and we have to dance to the tune that the great ones play."

Angela was silent. She could not face this common-sense logic of a Welsh carrier with a wife and four children.

"Well, here's the Minories, lass. You know where Billingsgate is? It won't take you more than five minutes to get there. Keep to the east of Tower Green—that's the way to go—and take care none of those cheeky apprentices worry you."

Angela got down from the carrier's cart and set off at a brisk speed. The carrier was somewhat of an optimist, and it was at least a quarter of an hour before her nostrils told her she was approaching the fish-market of Billingsgate, and there, right at the entrance of it, stood the 'Neptune'.

A little nervously she entered. The taproom was low-beamed and filled with a mass of rough men in seafaring clothes, interspersed with the even rougher porters from the market. There were harlots in plenty, women and girls of all ages, who'd sell themselves for fine red gold, a bottle of wine, or,

lower down the scale, for a penny or two and a glass of gin. These women eyed her resentfully. Even the potmen were anything but friendly, and it seemed to Angela that every tongue was being spoken in these narrow confines. She caught snatches of German, Dutch and French, but there were other languages besides these. Already the sailormen had begun to eye her speculatively.

"Captain Trompe?" she asked of a passing potman.

He glared at her, not hearing what she said. She repeated the name and his expression altered.

"You want Captain Trompe?" He set down his tray of pots with a clatter on the table, and beckoned to her to follow him. Evidently Captain Trompe was a valued patron of the 'Neptune' and mention of his name commanded respect.

The potman led the way to the back of the taproom and into a passage, and paused before a door on the left-hand side. He knocked.

"Captain Trompe there?"

A guttural voice answered; the potman pushed open the door and signed for Angela to enter.

Captain Trompe was seated at a table. There was a pile of papers in front of him and he looked up from his writing.

"What do you want?" he asked, his English good but with a strong accent.

Angela advanced, took out the letter and placed the hundred guineas beside it on the table.

"So," said Captain Trompe, and carefully checked the money before he made any effort to read the missive. "One hundred guineas . . . Good!" He took up a knife and slit the seals. There was a silence as he read. "Very well," he said slowly. "Tell she who writes that I know what I must do. My ship will be off the Fleet Ditch on the next tide. That is all." He shrugged his shoulders, counted the guineas again and slipped them into a capacious purse. He saw that Angela hesitated.

"Well?" he asked. The wounding woman did not wish to go through the taproom again? She was frightened? He smiled. She would come all the way across London with a letter which would get her hanged if she were caught, and yet she was frightened of a taproom with a few rough sailormen. He would show her. He rose to his feet and his heavy-leathered sea-boots creaked as he stumped across the room. He led the way into the passage, turned away from the taproom and came to a side door. He pulled the bolts and tugged it open. "Go across the yard," he said. "The wicket is open, and you'll find yourself on the edge of Tower Green. Do you know your way after that?"

Angela nodded and smiled.

"Good!" said Captain Trompe.

On the way back Angela had no such fortune as to fall in with another carrier, but her mind was so full of thoughts that she found herself at St. Paul's Churchyard in no time. Everything appeared to have been carried out very smoothly. She was thankful that it had been she and not Evans who had dealt with the pursuivants, and she realized that for once in these Stuart plottings luck had been on their side. One piece of luck led to another,



and Angela wondered whether it would be safe for her to call at the house by the Fleet Ditch. Sea-Coal Lane opened away on the left, and if ever such a mean street could hold out an invitation, this one did. Her disguise as a maid-servant was perfect. The pursuivants, the carrier and Captain Trompe had not seen through it, and she could not think that anybody else by a casual glance could tell her true identity. She would dearly love to see Julian again, but dare she risk the visit? If in any way she betrayed the Prince, Julian would never forgive her. But the urge to see him was so very strong. Angela looked cautiously about her. There was nobody in the vicinity who looked in the slightest like a pursuivant or officer of the law. She came to a decision and started briskly down Sea-Coal Lane.

"Drat that door!" said Mrs. Boulter. "The clapper has not been still for more than five minutes at a time the whole day long." She hastily dusted the flour from her hands and arms, rolled down her sleeves and went irritably up the stairs. She pulled back the door suspiciously and peered at Angela.

"What might you want?" she asked suspiciously, and her expression changed. "Why, if it isn't the Lady Angela! And what brings you here dressed like this, my lady?"

"Is Colonel Brett here?" asked Angela.

"Why, yes, my lady. And the gentleman who calls himself the Count d'Albany, and the Reverend Doctor King is with them. Yesterday they were out, seeing the sights of London, but today—why, I don't know what's come over them—moping they are, and talking fit to beat the band."

"Sh!" said Angela, and put a cautionary finger to her lips. She slipped past Mrs. Boulter and motioned for her to close the door.

"And how's your lady-mother?" gushed Mrs. Boulter. "A long time since I seen her ladyship. And his lordship, too."

"Is Colonel Brett upstairs?" asked Angela, ignoring these enquiries.

"Yes, my lady. In the dining-room on the first floor. The other gentleman spends most of his time in the Snug, and I think, if my ears don't betray me, the Reverend Doctor King is in there with him."

Angela sped up the stairs.

Julian was sitting in the window and gazing down on to the thronging market on the Fleet Quay. He did not hear Angela's entrance, and she was at his side before he turned his head.

"Angela!" he exclaimed, and jumped to his feet. "What are you doing here, and why a maid-servant? Have our fortunes fallen so low?" He took her hands and laughed. "No, I won't have that! London's streets are paved with gold. My dear, I swear it—at least, when you're around." He stooped and kissed her. "Tell me everything," he said.

Angela smiled up at him. There was so much to tell, she did not know where to start, and must they talk of this scheming? She wanted to be petted, to be loved a little, and, above all, to forget everything save themselves.

Julian kissed her again, but pressed his point. What was the reason of her coming? Had something dangerous occurred?

"My dress," said Angela. "Why, that's easy enough to explain. I've

been to Billingsgate to carry a message from my mother to Captain Trompe."

"Trompe!" echoed Julian. "Darling, is it as bad as that? You know what happened yesterday? The lords came here—the Prince did his utmost but they would make no movement. There will be no Rising."

"Poor Prince! At least he has learnt for himself how matters stand here."

"But Trompe?" asked Julian. "What are his orders?"

"He is to come to the Fleet Ditch and moor there. His men are to go ashore and sell their eels. Julian, at no cost must the Prince be captured."

"I'd rather die than that should happen, my darling."

"I know you would. But, Julian, I don't want you to die. I want you to live—I want the Prince to live."

He held her closely to him. "Angela, because I swore I would serve the Prince I found you. We must not leave him now."

"No, Julian," she whispered, and kissed him. "The Prince's situation in London is hopeless. He cannot raise the mob; the Jacobites—I use the Whiggish name for them—are lukewarm. Half the Tories curry favour with the Whigs, and the common people are but the common people, hoping, working and striving to exist. Commerce has gripped England and the merchants are the Galahads of today. That is why my mother sent the message to Captain Trompe. I carried it, not at her wish, but because . . ."—she sighed softly—"because I thought thereby I might have some chance of seeing you."

"Schemer!" smiled Julian, and held her closer to him.

"Trompe has his orders. If the worst comes, Prince Charles will at least have a chance."

"You mean escape?"

"What a bitter word, Julian! For a man to escape from his father's kingdom! Oh, the irony! Our hopes that are falling like autumn leaves." Prince Charles came quietly into the room.

"Angela," said Julian, quite unaware of the Prince's presence, "when does Trompe bring his boat? Tonight?"

"Yes," said Angela. "He will move on the next tide. But, dearest, this is a secret from the Prince until—"

"Until when, my Lady Angela?" asked Prince Charles quietly.

They turned at the sound of his voice, and Angela dropped into a deep curtsy. "Your Royal Highness!"

The Prince moved forward and, putting out his hand, raised her. "Lady Angela, I would not be worthy of the name of Stuart if I could not bear to hear ill news. Trompe and his boat, eh? . . . So the Young Pretender goes back again to his wanderings?"

"Sir," protested Julian, "it has not come to that! Only we take precautions. Your life and freedom are so precious to us."

"So precious to us" . . . I wonder how many of you . . . No, I am glad my friends plan an escape if they cannot give me back my own. Enough of my affairs. The coin spins in the air—who knows whether it will come down a James or George? Lady Angela, Colonel Brett and I have spent

some time together. He is a very charming companion, and during our conversations I have taken the liberty of prying into his affairs."

"Does His Royal Highness know?" whispered Angela, and blushed scarlet.

"And why should I not know?" asked the Prince, and smiled. "It is a princely duty to be concerned with the happiness of my subjects."

Prince Charles hesitated and began to speak again.

"I ask only one question, Lady Angela, and I need only one answer. Do you love Julian Brett?"

"More than anything else in the world," said Angela softly. "Your Royal Highness can never know the depth of the love and admiration that I hold for him. He has saved me from the Earl of Cooper, but it is not for that alone I love him. I love him for himself and for better or for worse."

"And you, Julian?"

"It is the same with me, sir. Only what have I to offer her? I am nothing—she is everything. Your Royal Highness, to save Angela from Cooper we acted the greatest bluff. I was to be the loophole, and that loophole has now become a noose and we are both securely caught within its grasp."

"No, Brett! A noose is for other things—I call this rather a lover's knot."

"But what can we do?" asked Angela anxiously. "If the Cause had succeeded, perhaps my parents might have relented, but now, sir, what solution can there be?"

"Perhaps I have a solution," said the Prince quietly. "Doctor King," he called. "Doctor King, come in here, if you please."

Doctor King entered. He saw Angela and Julian standing together, their hands clasped in each other's. "You called, sir?"

"Yes, Doctor. A Prince can do many things, but a Prince with a priest at his side has twice the power, for then he is master of things temporal and eternal."

"Why, yes, sir," said Doctor King, and looked completely mystified. "What would you have me do?"

"Have you your Prayer Book with you?"

Doctor King felt in his pocket and produced a small volume of the Common Prayer. "Yes, sir, here it is."

Prince Charles was enjoying the situation. Doctor King was gravely embarrassed and Lady Angela and Julian Brett were apprehensive of what might happen next.

"Well, Doctor, let's to business. Do you know any cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy wedlock?"

"You mean Doctor King is to marry us?" exclaimed Angela wide-eyed, and very near to tears.

"But, sir?" stammered Julian, and words failed him completely.

Doctor King held his Prayer Book in one hand and rubbed his chin nervously with the other. "Your Royal Highness, this question of marrying these two persons. There is the Marriage Act and the question of banns being published. If I might point out——"

"Enough of that," ordered the Prince. "Doctor, listen to me. So far as

I am concerned, I know only my father's laws and the laws that the Stuart Kings have made. This Marriage Act is a Hanoverian novelty. Why should I respect it? No, Doctor, if you carry through this marriage I'll stand surety that it shall be legal and binding."

Doctor King capitulated. "As Your Royal Highness desires." He motioned for Angela and Julian to approach him and to kneel down before him. His scruples had been silenced and he was the simple priest carrying out his office. He opened the Prayer Book and began to read the ceremony, and at last arrived where the ring was necessary. Prince Charles drew off a fine solitaire from his own little finger and put it into Julian's hand.

The ceremony came to an end and Julian and Angela rose to their feet and stood together man and wife.

"Make out a paper," said Prince Charles briskly. "Yes, Doctor, make it out and I will sign my name as witness to it. I think that Lord and Lady Primrose will be too good adherents to the Stuart Cause to question the validity of that signature. Yes, write it twice and I'll sign both of them. Colonel Brett shall have one, and we'll give Lady Angela her lines as well." He went to the head of the stairs and shouted loudly for Mrs. Boulter. She was to bring up a bottle of wine—the best there was in the cellar, and four glasses.

"I'm glad," said the Prince. "At least I've done one good thing by my coming to England. Now, all that remains is that I must kiss the bride and wish you luck, prosperity and happiness."

Angela tip-toed towards him, and he kissed her full on the lips.

"Lawks-a-daisy me!" exclaimed Mrs. Boulter, and almost dropped her tray of wine and glasses as she entered.

"To the bride!" pledged the Prince.

"To Angela and Julian!" toasted Doctor King, but still with a certain amount of trepidation.

"The bride," wept the departing Mrs. Boulter, copious tears streaming down her cheeks. "The bride! My Lady Angela a bride! Lawks-a-daisy me! And what will her ladyship say? Heaven preserve me, and his lordship too!"

Angela and Julian cared nothing for Mrs. Boulter's fears. Prince Charles signed for them to go through into the Snug and they were eager to be alone together. When the door was closed behind them he looked across at Doctor King.

"Listen to me, Doctor. 'I take the entire blame for this marriage. Do you understand? They love each other, and that's enough. 'Whom God has joined together let no man put asunder.' Take those words to Lady Primrose and tell her that I told you to quote them. You know, Doctor, strange things are happening to me since I came to England. I start to find new values in this way of life. I wonder which comes first, happiness or heredity?"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Doctor King quickly.

The Prince shrugged his shoulders. He walked across to the window and stood gazing out. The mist of a summer's evening was lying over the Thames, the noise and bustle of the day had passed and the workers had

gone to their homes. Seagulls were calling as they wheeled and hovered over the broad river and the tide was coming in.

"Happiness," said the Prince thoughtfully. "A man must search and find the boon which the Almighty has designed for him. The road is tortuous and twisting, but when he finds true love he must forsake all else. True love bears more brilliance than any kingly crown."

"Amen!" said Doctor King, and bowed his head.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### THE MASQUERADE IS ON

THE 'Broad Bottom' Administration had a great deal to worry about. The war clouds in Europe were growing darker; King George II's desires for more money for Hanover and his German relations and dependants were on the increase; the populace were crying out at the cost of bread, and already pamphleteers were tracing this to the amount of flour which aristocracy ladled on to its hair and wigs. The breach between the Duke of Bedford and the Duke of Newcastle showed less signs than ever of healing, and Bub Doddington and his party were constantly on their feet in Parliament to demand a greater recognition for Frederick, Prince of Wales. But the final and last straw came in simultaneous notices given in the *Daily Courant*, the *Tailer*, the *Spectator* and the *Guardian*. Obviously they had all come from the same pen, for there was little change in the phrasing of the caustic comment:

"A man of gossip who is usually well informed tells us that Mr. Pelham is indeed an adroit man, for, being in the midst of many complexes and unable to satisfy the wishes of the House of Hanover, he has allowed a high-placed member of the House of Stuart to come to London and be in readiness. Therefore, it would seem to be, as our gossip would inform us, that Britain may expect a change of King but hardly one of Government. To this end, it is supposed that a young lady much respected and admired in a certain Stuart quarter has already taken up her residence in a royal establishment, so that if and when the change takes place she will be conveniently at hand."

William Cooper, sitting in the sanctum of the offices of the Solicitor-General in Somerset House, read the comment and groaned. Each paper was exactly the same, and if he knew who had written it he swore he would have the libeller before His Majesty's judges in no time. Criminal libel . . . a dastardly attack . . . impertinence. He floundered to find words to describe his feelings. He must get in touch immediately with His Majesty's

principal Secretary of State and demand leave to bring all four editors before the Bar of the House of Commons. Never had anything been perpetrated like this since the time of Charles I. He realized what would happen. The clubs and coffee-houses would laugh themselves hoarse. These broadsheets would reach every drawing-room, and not only would the *haut monde* be chuckling, but the *hoi polloi* as well. He could imagine what Mr. Pelham would say. He almost felt the lashing tongue of His Grace the Duke of Newcastle. There was His Majesty King George II; at any moment he felt he might be summoned to St. James's Palace to brave a Teutonic *Donnerwetter*.

Johnson, like a frightened rabbit, came unobtrusively into the room. He brought the information that pursuivant Jem Pringle was without.

"Without!" stormed Cooper. "I know he's without. Without this damned Stuart Pretender. Has he laid hands on that devil Brett? No! Get out!" he stormed at Johnson. "Get out, or I'll kick you out!"

"Yes, my lord," stammered the frightened clerk. "But if I might make so bold, there is a messenger arrived from Downing Street. Mr. Pelham will see you at your earliest convenience, sir."

"Damn!" said Cooper. "Damn!" He rose and walked heavily across to the door, and here upon a peg was his hat and coat. He stood for a moment before a cheval glass, straightening his wig and setting his stock and cuffs. What would come next? If these scurrilous editors hinted at it, the whole of England would guess that Prince Charles Stuart was in the country. If he was to save his face, he knew he must act and act quickly. Every loophole and cranny was watched and no arrest had been made.

Johnson reappeared, poking his head birdlike round the door. "My lord," he stammered. "Your lordship's carriage awaits. And Mr. Pringle has gone about his business."

. . . . .

At Primrose House the *Daily Courant*, the *Spectator*, the *Tatler* and the *Guardian* had also arrived. And, having been carefully read and much enjoyed in the servants' hall, they had found their way to the Study table. Here, Lord and Lady Primrose were regarding them cautiously.

"Who did it, Arthur?" asked Lady Primrose. "Do you recognize anything in the style of the writing?"

Arthur shook his head. "It is unknown to me, Mary; but there is one thing I'm sure: that composition is a woman's."

"But what woman?"

Lord Primrose breathed a heartfelt sigh. "How could I know, Mary? I only give an opinion, and you must not nail me to it. What is the other matter you wished to speak to me about?"

"Angela," said Lady Primrose.

"Oh, dear! What more has Angela done?"

Lady Primrose began her story.

Yesterday, without her knowledge, Angela had taken a message in place of Evans. Later, she had made a diversion to the house at the Fleet Ditch.

"For what purpose?" asked Primrose. "What was this message?"

Lady Primrose eyed her husband. "Please be calm, Arthur. The message was my own contriving. I sent money and orders to Captain Trompe, telling him to move his ship and be at hand off the Fleet river."

"Good!" agreed Primrose. "Very good, my dear. I was going to suggest that myself, but you are ahead of me. Let us hope we have not come to that," he added almost brightly.

"I am not so sure we haven't, Arthur. Listen to me. You were so worried yesterday, I did not add to your troubles, but Angela did not return here until very late. When she did come I was waiting for her. She was in the seventh transport of happiness. When I questioned her she produced this paper. Arthur, she wanted to come and see you at once, but I told her it was better she should wait until the morning. I wished to see you first." Lady Primrose took a paper from her corsage, carefully unfolded it and placed it on the table before her husband.

Lord Primrose glanced down at the document. His attention became riveted. "She's married him! Angela's married Julian Brett! Mary, what forgery is this? Does she not know the laws of England? The Marriage Act? That she is under age? It is not legal; I'll fight every word of it, every letter!" He thumped his hand somewhat podgily upon the table.

"I wonder if you will," said Lady Primrose quietly. "You see, my dear, you are supposed to be a staunch Jacobite. I cannot, therefore, see how you would dare to refute in a Hanoverian court of law a marriage licence signed by so prominent a cleric as Doctor Arnold King and witnessed by none other than Prince Charles Edward Stuart."

"The traitor!" shouted Primrose.

"Who?" said Lady Primrose silkily. "Do you name Doctor King—or Prince Charles? No, Arthur, we have gone far enough, but now we can go no further. Don't you see that Angela has played the ace of hearts and that is the highest trump?"

"I shall withhold my blessing!" stormed Primrose, jumping to his feet and pacing up and down. "I've told her to get out of this house once. This time she goes immediately, and none of your pleadings will help her."

Lady Primrose took the outburst quietly. "I wonder, my dear, whether you are being wise. Is it a good thing to turn Angela into the streets at this moment? You forget that she would have only one place to go, and that is the house at the Fleet Ditch. Remember pursuivants and agents are constantly posted on watch outside. If she goes anywhere they will follow her."

"Do you connive this match, then?"

Lady Primrose did not answer. She stood watching her husband as he paced angrily up and down. "Arthur," she said at last, "let us try and see this another way. How much are you and I pledged to give for the Stuart Cause?"

"Why, everything," he said quickly, and stopped his pacing to look amazedly at her. "Why, everything, Mary."

"Then at least we have given something, and that is more than the other Jacobites have done. We have given our daughter for the Cause."

Lady Primrose saw that her words had taken effect. There was no

disguising the fact that neither she nor his lordship relished this clandestine marriage, but she had a woman's common sense. Lord Primrose was calmer now. He had gone back to his high-backed chair and had seated himself again, his eyes fixed upon those marriage lines and his fingers tapping ceaselessly upon the polished surface of the table.

Lady Primrose left him sitting this way, and passed quickly to the door and out into the corridor. She went onwards to the Great Hall and up the Crinoline Staircase.

"Angela!" she called as she reached the balcony.

"I am here, Mother," answered Angela, and opened the door of her bedroom.

Lady Primrose entered. "I have seen your father," she said, and her voice broke. "Angela, why did you do this? Why have you treated us in this way?"

Angela eyed her mother steadily. "I did it, Mother, because I love him. Isn't that the reason, the true reason, why men and women marry?"

. . . . .

Fortunately, Mrs. Boulter had no subscriptions for the broad sheets, so the *Daily Courant*, the *Spectator*, the *Tatler* and the *Guardian* did not come to the house at the Fleet Ditch. So, for that reason, neither Prince Charles nor Julian Brett knew what had been written in the Press.

During the morning the Prince preferred to take matters quietly. He had a little writing to do, and sat pen in hand before the window in the Snug.

Julian found time hard to kill, and especially as he was now a married man of some twelve hours' standing and deprived of his lovely bride. Doctor King had promised to visit them again, but as the morning wore on he failed to appear. But Julian, gazing out of the window from time to time, appreciated his reasons. Two fellows lolled in the street beneath, and they by the cut of their jibs were obviously pursuivants or Government agents. If Doctor King appeared, he was too well known to pass unnoticed. Meanwhile, Captain Trompe's sailors were certainly playing their part, and their cries of "Eel-ho! Eel-ho!" echoed again and again up and down Sea-Coal Lane, as, with baskets on their arms, they landed to sell their wares.

Mrs. Boulter served dinner early, for the Prince had eaten sparingly at breakfast. After they had eaten they lolled for a while over a glass of wine, and the Prince, in a better humour, put a touch of gaiety into his reminiscences. He talked a great deal of Glasgow, how he had found it in January 1746, after the retreat from Derby. When, in 'Forty-five, he had passed through the Lowlands on the triumphant march southwards, a forest of White Cockades had appeared everywhere, but in January 'Forty-six how different everything had been. Even the ladies of Glasgow had avoided him like the plague, and he had been a man alone in the midst of his own people. To this feminine ostracism there had been one exception. He smiled as his thoughts went back to this example of unchanging loyalty.

"Colonel Brett, it is a sunny afternoon; do you think it would be possible for us to take the air?"



Julian voiced a protest. He was sure the street was watched, and felt they would be courting disaster if they ventured outside. The Prince shook his head at Julian's fears.

"I was thinking," he said, "of something Mrs. Boulter told me. There is a secret passage which leads from this house, running beneath the roadway and coming out into the *cul-de-sac* which faces the water-front. Suppose you and I were to try this means of leaving?"

Julian dare not argue directly against the Prince's wishes. He summoned Mrs. Boulter and she declared she was ready to open up the passageway and show them how to use it. They made ready to go out and went down the steep stairs to the cellar. Here they found Mrs. Boulter standing beside what appeared to be a wine-cupboard. When they came up with her she pulled with considerable force and the whole tiers of dummy bottles swung away to disclose the passage which lay behind.

Mrs. Boulter picked up a lantern which stood already lighted. "Mind your heads, gentlemen. The Count d'Albany will have to crouch a little—if it will please you, sir."

The passage was some hundred feet in length, and they could hear the rumble of wheels and occasionally the patter of footsteps on the roadway above them. Stairs appeared ahead, and Mrs. Boulter, mounting cautiously, explained that they were moss-covered and slippery.

"Give me a hand, Colonel Brett," she called out. And together they pulled upon the handle of an iron door. Under their joint efforts this opened fairly easily, and they passed into what appeared to be a small boat-house.

"Here you are, sirs," explained Mrs. Boulter excitedly. "You are right on the edge of the Quay now. All you have to do is to open that door, see that the coast is clear, and walk out as if you was the King of England."

"Thank you," said the Prince. "Thank you."

"And when you come back," continued Mrs. Boulter, "the door will be on the latch and I won't lock the passage door. Now, gentlemen, I'll get back to the house again." She bobbed a curtsy and went bustling away.

Julian opened the door of the boat-house and looked cautiously about. There was nobody in sight, and by keeping away to the right they made a circuit of the buildings by a narrow flagged way, and came up right on the edge of a broad walk which led past the Fleet Prison to the Temple Gardens.

The Prince was thoroughly pleased to be out of doors again. As they walked along he confided that he was a bad house-man and ever since a youth there was nothing he liked better than to be abroad, walking the streets of a town or plodding moorland and valley with a gun over his arm in the search of game.

"Should I attempt to hire a conveyance, sir?" suggested Julian.

Prince Charles shook his head. "The walk will do us good."

"And might I ask, sir, in what direction we are walking?"

"That's a secret," Prince Charles laughed. "But, my dear Colonel, I'll share it with you. Yesterday I did a little service for you in straightening out

your lovers' tangle. Today I ask your assistance in a similar situation. We go to Leicester House."

"Leicester House!" Julian gulped with amazement. They were going to Leicester House, that hotbed of the Hanoverians. The Prince meant to enter the household of the Prince and Princess of Wales—the Hanoverian Prince and Princess of Wales!

The Prince watched his astonishment and continued to banter. "My mother, the Princess Clementina Sobieski, was a stickler for Court etiquette. She would never have forgiven me if I failed to pay my respects to the reigning house of a country which I visited."

"Clementina," said Julian slowly.

"Yes," said the Prince. "Clementina. 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' That's what Shakespeare said."

Outside Leicester House the guard was being changed. A buck-toothed subaltern of the Foot Guards was reading the orders to his half-company, a sergeant-at-arms standing rigidly at his side. He came to the end of the standing orders and started upon a special paragraph which had been added only that morning. There was a rumour that the Young Pretender, the Prince Charles Edward Stuart, was about in London. Every sentry was charged to be especially alert as there was a threat of slaughter and sudden death to the Royal Family.

"Leave to speak, sir," roared the sergeant. "The muskets are already loaded with ball ammunition."

"Very good, sergeant," said the subaltern, and rapped out a string of more or less unintelligible orders. The half-company, with clash of accoutrements and clump of heavy boots, went marching onwards to make the next posting.

An elderly porter, standing at the side gate, watched this display of military might with complete boredom. The afternoon was hot, and owing to the sickness of one of his fellows he was forced to do double duty. His thoughts were interrupted by the sudden appearance of two gentlemen, who approached his gate.

"Would it be possible to see Miss Walkinshaw?" asked the elder of the two.

"Miss Walkinshaw, sir?" said the porter cautiously. "Why, we've two ladies of that name staying here, so to speak. Which Miss Walkinshaw would you require to see, if I might make so bold?"

A gold guinea changed hands, and the porter's interest in the requirements of the gentlemen became less abstract.

"Miss Clementina Walkinshaw."

"Why, yes, sir," said the porter with some alacrity. "And what might your business be?"

"We are two friends of hers from Scotland, my man, and we bring a message from her uncle. The call is purely social, but as we leave tomorrow morning early, I would like to speak to her."

Another guinea tinkled into the porter's hand.

"Indeed, sir, that's a civil enough request, though there's an order that no one is to be admitted to Leicester House today." He glanced down at

the two guineas as they lay in the palm of his hand. "Still, Miss Walkinshaw is not staying in Leicester House, if you get the meaning, sir. She's lodging in the housekeeper's house, sir. Her sister, Miss Catherine Walkinshaw, being lady-in-waiting—in ordinary—and housekeeper to Her Royal Highness."

"Indeed?"

"Well, sir," said the porter, pulling the lapels of his jacket, "as neither of you look like that marauding Young Pretender, I'll stretch a point in your favour."

A third guinea clinked into his hand. The porter whistled up his mate, told him to keep watch upon the gate, and beckoned the gentlemen to follow him.

The lady-in-waiting's house was an annexe to the main building, and in order to reach it they had to walk up a broad carriage drive. Suddenly there came a commotion, orders were shouted, the guard turned out, formed up into line, and presented arms. Numbers of footmen had appeared and lined the steps. Gardeners and porters hurried from all sides towards the carriageway and began whispering amongst themselves.

"The King—the King!"

A moment later King George II, with the Duke of Newcastle in attendance, came down the steps of Leicester House. The great outer gates had been thrown open and a royal coach and four drove up and halted, whilst a sovereign's escort of Life Guards came clattering into view.

More onlookers had congregated on either side of the drive, and with the porter standing immediately in front of them, Prince Charles and Julian Brett were completely hemmed in on all sides.

Julian glanced enquiringly at the Prince. All those about them had uncovered, but the Prince still retained his hat upon his head. Should they uncover? Would Prince Charles make a scene?

King George was in deep conversation with the Duke of Newcastle and had a petulant frowning look. Rumour had it that the Princess of Wales was a woman of excellent sense but considerable obstinacy, and King George of all men liked his own way. When it came to a question of forcing the wishes of his mistress, the Countess of Yarmouth, across a royal Saxe-Gotha, the situation became difficult. Behind the King came a train of courtiers, whispering surreptitiously amongst themselves. In another moment the royal party would be abreast.

Julian took his eyes from King George and fixed them upon Prince Charles.

"Your hat," said the Prince quickly. "Uncover, Colonel Brett! It is only right that we should show deference to the King of Hanover."

With a quick movement Julian followed the Prince's example and took off his hat.

The King was abreast of them. For an instant he broke off his conversation with the Duke of Newcastle to look about him, and in that moment his eyes and those of Prince Charles Edward Stuart met. King George's glance, which was casual, changed to one of interest. His eyes were fixed upon Prince Charles's face. For a moment it appeared as if the King would

stop and address the Prince, but he changed his mind and, turning back to the Duke of Newcastle, continued his one-sided discussion as he walked onwards.

"Hurrah for the King!" cried a few voices. "Hurrah for King George!"

The captain in charge of the sovereign's escort issued a string of commands. There was a flash as sabres came to the 'present'; flunkeys were ready to usher the King into his coach, to rug him and jump nimbly back on to their perches.

"Advance at the trot!" sang out the captain of the escort, and with a clatter of hooves the equipage moved away.

"Well, gentlemen," said the porter hopefully, "I'll warrant you didn't expect to see the King?"

Prince Charles laughed. "No, it was almost worth a kingdom to be so close to him." He took out another guinea and spun it in the air and, catching it deftly, placed it in the porter's hand.

"If you'll come this way, sirs," said the porter, and directed them across a grassy lawn which flanked Leicester House. "It's shorter this way, and besides, no questions will be asked."

They reached the lady-in-waiting's house, which was built in the style of Queen Anne's architecture and stood in a semi-detached position on the extreme left of Leicester House.

"Here we are, sir," announced the porter, and gave the highly burnished knocker a rat-tat-tat. A moment later a pert maidservant appeared in the doorway. "Two gentlemen to see Miss Clementina Walkinshaw," announced the porter, and rattled the money in his hand.

The maid took the hint. "Miss Clementina Walkinshaw? It's a good thing you want her and not her sister, because her sister's attending on Her Royal Highness. Didn't you see the King pass just a minute ago? If you'll come this way, gentlemen."

She winked at the porter, and hastened to conduct them into the hall.

"What name shall I give Miss Walkinshaw?"

Julian saw that the Prince hesitated, and wondered what might come next. They had reached the centre of the hall and stood beside a grained oak door which was closed. A spinet was being played with considerable skill, but the theme was subdued and a little mournful.

"What name shall I tell Miss Walkinshaw?" demanded the maid a little impatiently. Two gold guineas dropped into her hand.

"I beg your pardon," Prince Charles smiled. "Say Mr. Stewart, but I spell my name S-T-E-W-A-R-T."

"Thank you, sir," said the girl brightly, her remark serving a dual purpose. She knocked upon the oak door, waited a moment and entered. The spinet playing ceased. A moment later the maid reappeared.

"Miss Clementina will be pleased to see you, gentlemen," she announced. "This way, if you please." She made a gesture toward the door.

"Thank you," said the Prince, as he passed her and entered the room and closed the door behind him.

The girl looked curiously at Julian. "Aren't you going in?" she asked. Julian shook his head. "Wouldn't I be better with you?" he said.

The maid sized him up. "You might be, and you might not. But this isn't the right place—or time either. Still, if you've to wait I might find something to do—and keep you company."

"Thank you," said Julian, and watched her make a pretence of tidying a knick-knack table.

Inside the music-room, Clementina Walkinshaw had risen from the spinet. The light streaming in through the windows was in her eyes, and she could not easily see the features of the man who had entered.

"You required to see me, sir? Are you sure it is not my sister with whom you have business?"

"I am certain I have no business to discuss with your sister, madam."

"Charles!" she cried in bewilderment. "Your Royal Highness—sir! Am I dreaming? This is madness! What nonsense is this?"

"This is no dream, Clementina. I'm reality, I assure you of that. I have come to talk reality to you."

"But here, sir, in this place, under the Hanovers' roof!"

He silenced her, and coming towards her put his hand upon her arm. "Why not, my dear? You've a safe refuge enough under a Hanoverian roof. Then why should I not be? Don't be so frightened. My stay is very brief." He smiled reassuringly at her.

"But you haven't come here—risked this terrible danger—to see me?" She looked up at him and her eyes were filled with tears. "You have done this folly for me, sir?"

"Yes, Clementina," he said gently. "Please listen to me, that is what I ask. In Scotland we plighted a troth, but it was left-handed. I was not free to give you the love and homage you deserve. This time when I came to England I sought for something else, but again schemes have come to nothing. I came to take this Kingdom for my Royal father, but the Kingdom is no longer his. No, my darling, I have seen with my own eyes something which a thousand despatches had failed to tell me. I know I have lost my father's crown. London has taught me a lesson of this new regime that's come to Britain. Merchants, prosperity, trade and commerce are the cardinal points of a new regime. These Germans are usurpers, for they have stolen our birthright, which is as real today as ever it was; but what right has a Royal House to disrupt the security and well-being of a million homes? Do you understand what is in my heart?"

Clementina was overcome with emotion. She saw him blurred through a veil of tears. "Have you come here to tell me of your renunciation, sir? Are the efforts of your lifetime swept aside and lost? Is this the reason why you have braved all this terrible danger?" she challenged.

"No, sweetheart, I have come for another reason. If Britain has broken her troth, I ask you will you keep yours with me?" Prince Charles spoke very earnestly. "Listen, Clementina, very soon I must go back to the Continent. There I shall become that poorest of poor things, a Prince without a kingdom, and, in time, a King without a throne. Will you be a recompense for an empty heart? I ask will you keep your troth? Will you follow me and be beside me in the years that lie ahead?"

"Oh, Charles," she sobbed. "Charles—Charles! I'll come with you to the ends of the earth. What I promised four years ago is as live and as real today. I am yours. Say the word and I will come to you anywhere—to the ends of the earth."

He bent and kissed her, full and passionately, on the lips. She pressed herself against him and his arms went about her waist. "Clementina," he whispered, "my darling Clementina, you have filled the emptiness of defeat."

They stood together, oblivious of all else save that they had found each other. The danger of their situation was forgotten. Both knew the path ahead would be rough and the censure cruel, but in that moment in the lady-in-waiting's house at Leicester House, and in the middle of London, Prince Charles Edward Stuart and Clementina Walkinshaw found each other again, and burnt the last of the Stuart hopes in the flame of their awakened passion.

In the hall Julian Brett was on tenterhooks. His Royal Highness was certainly protracting the interview, and Julian, standing alone, was hypersensitive to every sound, and he knew if danger threatened he must warn the Prince. The maid had left him almost immediately after Prince Charles had gone into the music-room. Her interest had been casual, and the two guineas safely in her apron pocket had been enough to satisfy any doubts or qualms she might have had. But there were other possible interruptions to be considered. Sooner or later Miss Catherine Walkinshaw's attendance upon the Princess of Wales must terminate, when she would obviously return to her house. The Prince must not be discovered either in the house or in an incriminating position with Clementina, and as time went on he wondered if he should not interrupt them and warn them that every moment's delay meant increasing danger.

The maid came back into the hall. At first she moved casually about, straightening an ornament here and there, but all the while glancing at Julian out of the corner of her eye. At last she approached him openly.

"I didn't think you were a servant," she said inquisitively. "Why are you waiting outside? Why don't you go in with the other gentleman?"

Julian side-tracked the direct question. The other gentleman's business was of a private nature. He had just walked along with him for the sake of giving him a little company, that was all.

"What sort of business?" asked the maid, with growing suspicion.

Julian shrugged his shoulders. If the business was private how could he know the nature of it? She was gradually edging towards the door of the music-room, and he did his utmost to place himself in front of her, a manoeuvre she was quick to notice.

"Why are you keeping me away from that door?" she demanded. "How do I know that he's not up to all sorts of mischief in there? What's Miss Walkinshaw going to say about this? And her own sister?"

"Don't you worry your head about that," said Julian, and held out another guinea encouragingly.

She shook her head emphatically. "I'm worried, and you're not helping me." She faced him. "Why has this man come here to see Miss Clementina? Who is he? You're a gentleman by the look of you, and gentlemen don't

stand outside doors like lackeys, not unless . . . unless . . ." Her voice trailed off and she was staring at him.

"Stop!" ordered Julian. "You're making a fool of yourself. You're mad!" He lifted his hands menacingly. "Don't dare to cry out. If you raise the alarm, I'll——"

The maid was staring wide-eyed at him. "I know," she whispered hoarsely. "I know who he is! It's what the papers had written in them this morning. He's . . . he's . . . Bonnie Prince Charlie!"

Julian did not answer. The maid was looking at him in terror.

"The mistress will kill me if they know this. I'll be put in gaol. They'll hang me."

"Need you tell them?" asked Julian evenly. "Even if he is whom you think he is, I swear to you he's not come to do harm."

"You admit who he is," she interrupted.

"I admit nothing," said Julian sternly. "You're behaving like an idiot."

His effort to calm her failed. "I know! I know!" stammered the girl. The appalling situation had grasped full hold of her. In the stress of the moment she tottered. She was on the point of fainting under her emotion, and the only alternative was a fit of violent hysterics.

Julian grasped her roughly round the waist. "Stop it!" he ordered. "Stop it. Do you want to get yourself hanged or burnt for treason?"

"They wouldn't," she gasped. "They wouldn't!"

"Wouldn't they?" snapped Julian. "Stop crying—pull yourself together. We're both in this. Do you understand?"

With a tremendous effort the girl regained control of herself.

"Keep your mouth shut and nothing will happen to you," implored Julian.

The girl nodded her head dumbly.

From down the long corridor which joined the two houses together came a sound of footsteps, and the low murmur of voices talking confidentially.

"The mistress—Miss Catherine Walkinshaw," whispered the maid. "Can't you warn him, or something? She's with Mr. Cresset, who's secretary to the Princess, and he's cleverer than a box-load of monkeys."

"I'll warn him," said Julian, and leaning past the maid he tapped lightly upon the music-room door. "Sir," he implored, "you must come out. We must leave this house immediately."

"My dear fellow," protested the voice of Prince Charles, but a moment later the door was opened, and Clementina, followed by the Prince, walked quietly into the hall. Almost at the same moment there appeared the rotund, bespectacled and birdlike Cresset and Miss Catherine Walkinshaw. The latter was resplendent in full Court dress, and wore the three ostrich plumes nodding upon her lofty head-dress. Catherine was younger than Clementina, but physically much the elder. She was running to fat, and the tight lacing of fashion caused her considerable discomfort.

"Well, that is settled, Mr. Cresset," she declared exhaustedly, and tapping with her fan to accentuate the decision taken. She swept her eyes towards Clementina and onwards to Prince Charles and Julian Brett. "My dear

Clementina, I didn't realize you were receiving this afternoon," she said disapprovingly. "Might I know the names of these gentlemen who have honoured me by visiting my house?"

"My dear Catherine," returned Clementina, with studied easiness, "the call is a casual one from old friends from Scotland. Do you not recognize these gentlemen? Mr. Ian and Mr. Hamish Stewart of Lewick."

The Prince bowed charmingly, with an ease that was more in keeping with the Courts of Europe than the dourness of the Orkneys. Julian followed his example, and Catherine Walkinshaw returned a frigid curtsy.

Mr. Cresset also made a slight acknowledgment of his body from the waist. He coughed, asked Catherine's pardon, took snuff and sneezed considerably.

Catherine turned to regard the maid with displeasure.

"Arabella, why are you ogling here? There's no need for you to remain any longer." She gave an arrogant sign of dismissal and the maid bobbed and went thankfully towards the servants' quarters.

"Catherine," said Clementina, "these gentlemen have brought a message from Uncle Robert in Glasgow. He invites me to return, and I was wondering whether under the circumstances this suggestion would suit your plans. If so, they are riding north within a day or so and would offer me their escort."

Catherine tightened her lips. The prospect of Clementina leaving Leicester House was an extremely welcome one. The Princess of Wales had spoken on the matter only five minutes previously, and Miss Walkinshaw realized that Her Royal Highness's inspiration had come from none other than His Majesty himself.

"We shall see—we shall see," she announced coldly. "Perhaps if Mr. Stewart would leave his address you could communicate our decision. It is very kind of Uncle Robert Walkinshaw to offer you a lodging, Clementina." She spoke the last part of her sentence to make it abundantly clear she considered this another act of charity towards the unwanted sister.

"Yes." Clementina winced.

"At your service, madam," said Prince Charles, and gave another elegant bow.

Julian realized that the eyes of Mr. Secretary Cresset were looking keenly at the Prince. He hoped there would be no more of these courtly extravagances.

"That's settled, gentlemen," said Catherine, with an air of finality and relief. "You have the gentleman's address?"

"Why, yes," agreed Clementina quickly. "I know where I can find him, don't I, Mr. Stewart?" She glanced towards the Prince.

The interview came to an end. Prince Charles and Julian took their leave of the Misses Walkinshaw and were ushered to the door by the bird-like Cresset, who stood smiling after them with an inscrutable expression on his face.

"Phew!" said Prince Charles when they were out of earshot, but he could not amplify his remark, as the porter was already in attendance. He led them across the lawns towards the side gate of Leicester House, and he



regaled them with eulogies on the new rose bushes which the Princess of Wales had recently planted in the front beds; nor could they cut him short, for any hurry on their part would quickly arouse suspicion.

Once outside the gates, Prince Charles and Julian were able to quicken their pace. They passed over Leicester Fields and turned down towards the Strand. Neither of them spoke. Julian for his own part thinking he had no right to be inquisitive as to what had passed between Prince Charles and Miss Clementina Walkinshaw, and as the Prince volunteered no information on that subject they both agreed that silence was the most golden of virtues. Though now that the escapade was over Julian found himself breaking into a cold sweat at the thought of the risks they had run.

They walked on and Julian kept constant watch in case any pursuivant or agent had picked up their trail. He fully realized that Leicester House was watched, but felt they could thank King George for something. His visit to his daughter-in-law had obviously so distracted the attention of the Government agents as to allow them to pass unnoticed.

Temple Bar came in sight and they started downhill towards the Lud Gate and, reaching it, turned into Sea-Coal Lane. Just as they turned the corner Julian noticed a smartly dressed woman on the other side of the lane looking intently at them. He realized in an instant that her glance was anything but casual, and immediately broke off his conversation with the Prince. Before he had time to look again the woman had disappeared into the shadow of an alleyway. He had only been her for an instant, but even though her face was veiled there was something very familiar about her mode of dress, her style of hat and the contour he had caught of her figure.

"Let us quicken our pace, sir," he urged, and the Prince glanced curiously at him.

"Certainly, Colonel; has anything happened?"

"I'm not sure, sir. There was a woman standing at the corner of the lane, and I have a feeling she recognized one of us."

The Prince laughed. "I'll make no claim to notoriety, Brett; I've come to the conclusion I'm the least-known man in London."

They found the archway which led to the boat-house and turned down it. For a moment they waited cautiously in the shadow, but there was no sign of movement in the lane.

"Brett, you're seeing ghosts—and female ones at that," said the Prince; "but have your own way. If you think we're safer beneath Mrs. Boulter's roof, let's get there as soon as possible."

They started forward again. The boat-house and the landing-stage were entirely deserted, and whilst Julian pulled open the double doors, Prince Charles stood moodily gazing across the river, watching the constantly moving shipping and scenes of mercantile activity. There was an expression of sadness, even of yearning, on his face.

"We're ready, sir," called Julian, and waited for the Prince to enter. Once they were inside, Julian bolted the doors securely and pulled up the trap which covered the secret passage.

"What a way for a Royal Stuart to enter a house!" sighed Prince Charles,

and stood fretfully whilst Julian made the signal for Mrs. Boulter to bring the lantern.

Outside, on the landing-stage, the shadow of a woman's form was thrown upon the sandy ground. It remained there motionless, a silhouette of a fine figure and a large picture hat. An instant only. The faint scuffle of light feet and the shadow had gone.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### MASQUERADER BRETT

BOULTER, for once in his decorous life, showed excitement. He looked first at Lord Primrose and turned his protruding eyes towards her ladyship.

"So, Boulter," asked his lordship, "you gave this person ten guineas?"

"Ten guineas was the price he asked, my lord."

"Don't let's quibble over money," demanded Lady Primrose. "Boulter, tell the story again."

"Certainly, my lady," said Boulter eagerly, sensing the dramatic for the first time in his ordered life. "As you know, my lord—my lady—I have the habit of visiting the Cock Tavern in Fleet Street."

Lord Primrose, who had on several occasions detected the slight effluvia of strong liquor when his butler stood behind him at dinner, had practical reason for knowing that during the last twenty years Boulter had been a consistent visitor to some tavern or other.

"It is my habit," continued Boulter, "if your lordship will forgive me, of taking a little stimulant before serving dinner."

"Yes," said Lady Primrose. "Can we leave a discussion of your habits to some other time?"

"Why, certainly, my lady," agreed Boulter. He paused impressively. "This evening I was approached by a person named Johnson. He is a seedy individual, my lord, if I might so describe him, and is employed as a clerk by my Lord Cooper."

Lord and Lady Primrose exchanged glances. "Continue," ordered her ladyship.

"This person, Johnson, is somewhat at variance with Lord Cooper. In fact, I understand that his lordship has intimated that their association is to terminate. Therefore Johnson, who has served him for many years, nurtures something of a grudge."

"Persons who betray their masters usually go into some rigmarole to excuse their treachery," said Lady Primrose.

"Yes, my lady," agreed Boulter. "This person Johnson gave me the following information, for which I was to pay, and did pay, the sum of ten guineas. He assured me that this information was correct, and, more—that

by becoming the possessor of it I might be instrumental in keeping my Lord Primrose's head securely on his shoulders."

Lord Primrose gulped but said nothing.

"It seems," continued Boulter, "that a person, Mrs. Polly Broad, happened to be on the corner of Sea-Coal Lane this afternoon. While she was standing there she recognized Mr. Julian Brett, who has been lately in our employ."

"You mean Colonel Brett, Boulter?"

"Really, Mary!" exploded his lordship. "Please allow Boulter to continue."

"The woman was wearing a veil, which, she explains, was for the reason that many houses of ill-fame are in the vicinity and she did not wish to be mistaken for a strumpet."

"She could have saved herself the trouble," snapped Lady Primrose. "She saw Julian Brett, and I take it this additional information as to the veil means he did not recognize her?"

"Yes, my lady," agreed Boulter emphatically. "She followed His Royal Highness and Colonel Brett to the boat-house on the landing-stage which flanks the Fleet Ditch. She saw them enter this boat-house and disappear. She waited for some while and then went directly to Somerset House and made contact with pursuivant Jem Pringle, with whom I believe she is enamoured. She laid the entire information with him, and was at once taken into the presence of Lord Cooper."

Lord Primrose coughed nervously. "Yes, yes," he said. "And this person Johnson was present and heard what transpired?"

"Every word, my lord," said Boulter, with considerable personal satisfaction. "He was in, fact, in his lordship's inner office at the time of Mrs. Broad's entry. In the excitement which followed Lord Cooper forgot about him, and as Johnson had just been informed by his lordship that he was to be dismissed because of some trouble over a letter, he was naturally in a somewhat vindictive mood."

Lord Primrose pursed his lips thoughtfully. "Ten guineas is not a great deal of money for information of such momentous importance."

"My lord," explained Boulter, "the person Johnson asked for fifty guineas in the first instance. I did not have more than ten guineas upon me, and as his need for the money was very great I promised him that should your lordship be pleased with the information, you might be induced to consider an additional payment. Moreover, I took the liberty of stressing the fact to Johnson that the information was only of transitory worth, and should he withhold it too long it would become valueless."

"Very clever of you, Boulter," said Lady Primrose. "I'd almost forgive you your tipping at the 'Cock'."

"What is this about transitory information?" interrupted his lordship.

"That a watch has already been established in Sea-Coal Lane and the whole of the Fleet Ditch is cordoned off. According to Johnson, Lord Cooper has some apprehension of the mob, and, realizing how easily passions are inflamed in these quarters by the sight of the arrest of any person, it has been decided to await until the coming of darkness before the pounce is

made." He drew a breath. "In addition to pursuivants and agents in great numbers a company of the Foot Guards has been told off to assist and to ward off any chance of interference."

"A company of Foot Guards!" ejaculated Lord Primrose. "They mean to make the arrest in style."

"If I might make so bold, my lord," said Boulter pompously, "I should have considered a regiment would not have been untoward to effect the arrest of the person of His Royal Highness Prince Charles Edward Stuart, titular Prince of Wales."

"That's enough, Boulter," said Lady Primrose. "I thank you for your facts, but we can do without your views upon them."

"Very good, my lady," said Boulter submissively. He cleared his throat. "About the extra honorarium for the person Johnson. Have I liberty to speak on the matter?"

"Give him another twenty-five guineas," ordered Lady Primrose. "And, Boulter, ask Lady Angela to come down here. I think she's in her room. Otherwise, perhaps, in the garden. Find her, if you please."

"Very good, my lady," said Boulter. He bowed and walked with an arrogant dignity to the library door.

The bombshell had come. In their heart of hearts both Arthur and Mary Primrose had expected it, and when Doctor Arnold King, hurriedly summoned, came to join them he accepted it as the inevitable. The whole idea of Prince Charles being able to start a rising in the favour of the Stuart Cause must now be forgotten. Only one issue remained: that was at all costs to arrange his escape and save him from his enemies.

"Yes," agreed Lord Primrose. "If they take him, we will all fall with him. Should he escape, then the scandal will be so great that the Whigs will fear to publish it."

Lady Primrose looked contemptuously at her husband. She did not consider that this was the moment for him to think of his own skin.

"What shall we do, Arnold?" she asked. "We must get a message to him before the trap is sprung."

"Rather," said Doctor King, "what shall be done for us? There is a quotation in the Bible which aptly fits the situation: 'The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.'"

"You mean Julian Brett?" said Lady Primrose. "Arnold, for once I agree with you about that young man."

"Yes, Mary?" said the doctor. "Would you allow Angela to take the warning? She knows the Fleet Ditch and the house. We have nobody trustworthy to send. This is no matter for servants." He hesitated. "Mary, was that why you sent Boulter for her?"

Lord Primrose exploded. "Mary, I have said this before and I shall say it again. Under no circumstances will I be a party to anything which puts our daughter in contact with this fellow Brett."

Mary Primrose glared. "Arthur, I'll not listen to another word of this narrow-minded obstinacy. Do you hear me?"

Lord Primrose looked resentfully from his wife to Arnold King. The door opened and Angela came quickly into the library.

"Angela," said Lady Primrose tersely. "How much do you know?"

"I think everything, Mother. Boulter was rather full of himself, and I thought it would save time if he told me his story." She hesitated. "One thing is proved to the hilt: Cooper is a fiend and that woman Broad a lying Jezebel!"

"Angela!" exclaimed Lord Primrose.

She moved round to look squarely at her father. "For once I'm not going to mince words. Both of you have done everything that is horrible to Julian. You've listened to any claptrap, any rumour, any calumny, and lapped it up, but now you are cornered you want Julian to save you. You're frightened for yourselves, but you don't think of him. Isn't that true? Then let me tell you something: Julian would give his life to save the Prince, and I would be proud if he did so. What he must do is for Prince Charles and for him alone. You have no right to ask a single favour of him."

"Really, Angela!" expostulated Mary Primrose. "As if we had not troubles enough without this ingratitude from our daughter!"

"Ingratitude!" echoed Angela, her face flushed. "How you can twist that word, Mother, to suit yourself! For what should I be grateful? Because you have taken my body and twisted and turned it into a vagary of shapes, because you have painted and patched and powdered me like a *poupée*, or because you have thrown me at this fellow Cooper to suit your higher politics? Oh, I could go on for hours!" She stopped short and grew calm again. "Come! Tell me, all of you, what can I do to save Prince Charles?"

There was a silence. Neither Lord nor Lady Primrose could bring themselves to speak, and even Doctor King was silent.

"I know what you want," said Angela very quietly, and her face was very grave. She moistened her lips with her tongue. "A message has to be taken to the Fleet Ditch. Is that it? The Prince must be warned and sent away, and somebody must sacrifice himself for the success of your scheme. Thank God these Whig pursuivants take no notice of maid-servants, save to attempt to seduce them."

"You mean that you'll go?" asked Lord Primrose. "Angela, my dear, there is no other way. Your mother told me of your escapade. Naturally, I was perturbed, but it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, as the saying goes. . . ." He paused lamely, his sentence unfinished.

"Yes, Father—as the saying goes." Angela turned on her heel and ran out of the library. As she went she was calling for Evans, and when she reached her chamber her maid was already waiting.

"Evans," she ordered, "I want your clothes again. And how long will it take you to get this powder out of my hair? Yes, unhook me at once. Be quick! Hurry! Lives depend on this. Hurry!"

Evans's fingers started quickly to unfasten the buttons and hooks.

"My lady," she asked anxiously, "will you wear the print frock as you did before, and with my stuff coat?"

"Yes," agreed Angela. "I'll go just as I was before. Perhaps those pursuivant devils will recognize me and remember the slap I gave one of them. Hurry, Evans! Hurry!"

. . . . .

Darkness had fallen, and the Fleet Ditch was devoid of life and the cobbles of Sea-Coal Lane no longer echoed with commercial enterprise. But lurking in the doorways, and hidden almost from view, were pursuivants and agents of the established Government. They stood silently, as beasts of prey waiting for the moment to pounce. A new moon cast a desultory glimmer upon the Thames, and all traffic upon the river had ceased. A dog barked in the distance, and another took up the cry; a third added his tongue, then silence fell again.

A pursuivant stamped his feet, which had grown stiff with inaction, and whispered to a passing mate: "Jem Pringle ain't turned up yet, has he?"

"No, Roger, he'll come when the time's ripe."

The first pursuivant sighed. "Like looking for a needle in a haystack, this is. Do you know, in this last hour the only person I've seen was a maidservant, and she with all the airs and graces of a duchess."

"A maidservant? Where did she go?"

"Heaven knows," grumbled the pursuivant. "And not my business neither—or is it? Jem Pringle said nobody was to be touched until he gave three blasts on that whistle of his. These blasted Jacobites! What do they want to be so mealy-mouthed about?"

Distantly came the sound of marching feet. There was a hoarse order and this noise of movement grew gradually nearer.

"They'll be the Foot Guards, Roger. Time must be near. They wouldn't march the soldiers in until they were ready."

"Which house is it, Fred?"

Fred pointed upwards. "That one in the centre, so I'm told. But we're going to search the lot, fetch 'em all out, like rats out of their holes. Maybe we'll give Jack Ketch a job to do at last. Those halters of his haven't swung a traitor for long enough."

The houses on the other side of the street were dark, and not a glimmer of light showed from any of them. For the most part they were unoccupied dwellings which had dropped into decay, whilst those which were inhabited preferred to keep their lattices tight closed against the hooliganism of the district.

All at once a lattice was drawn and a beam of yellow-fingered light swept out between the parting curtains.

"Not much new, sir," said Julian, and stepped back from the window of the dining-room. "There are pursuivants and agents in every doorway. That was the military we heard coming up."

"The military, eh? Let's hope it's the Foot Guards," said Prince Charles cuttingly. "Perhaps even the Coldstreams. What irony! The regiment raised to replace my grandfather King Charles II back on his throne is now sent by a German monarch to effect my arrest."

The Prince shrugged his shoulders and paced slowly up and down the room. "Colonel Brett, you must forgive me this bitterness, but surely at this moment I can speak from my heart?"

Julian became practical. A light had been shown from an upper window at the back of the house, and this signal would warn Captain Trompe that

the moment was near. Mrs. Boulter and Angela were in the cellars and ready to operate the door of the secret passage.

"But what of the pursuivants?" asked the Prince. "Surely they are not foolish enough to watch only one side of this house?"

"I've thought of that," explained Julian. "But, sir, we must not disturb the wasps' nest before the last moment. There is a man watching on the river side, but we can deal with him when the time comes."

Angela came quickly into the room. She was dressed as a maid, and there was a high colour in her cheeks brought on by stooping in the passage and climbing the steep stairs.

"Captain Trompe has sent a light signal back. That means the boat is coming off, Julian," she announced breathlessly.

"You must make ready to go, sir," said Julian to Prince Charles.

"But what of you, Colonel Brett?" asked Prince Charles.

"Why, sir, I must stay behind. Somebody must hold their attention."

"But, Brett," expostulated the Prince, "I cannot allow you to do this; you are sacrificing yourself for me. That is an impossible situation."

Angela interrupted. "Your Royal Highness, please do not delay when every moment counts. Julian and I have discussed everything. At all costs you must be taken to safety, and out of reach of the Hanoverians."

"What of Julian? If he is captured, you realize what these devils will do to him?"

"Yes," said Angela quietly. "We realize everything, but Julian and I know what our duty is. We owe it to the White Rose and to Your Royal Highness."

The Prince began to protest vehemently. "I cannot allow this! I refuse! I came here of my own free will, and now that I am cornered I must accept the results."

"No," said Julian. "This is the moment, sir, when I will argue with a Prince. What we do or suffer is little provided the Cause lives on."

Prince Charles hesitated. "I am ready," he said simply. "If only I had had a hundred others like you, Colonel Brett!"

"Now, sir," said Julian, "might I have one of your own coats, sir? Why not the one you are now wearing? Please give it me. And your wig."

"What madness is this?" demanded the Prince angrily, but Angela crossed quickly and put a restraining hand upon his arm.

"It is part of our plan, sir. You promised you would follow and help us in the strategy we have devised."

Slowly the Prince pulled off his coat and laid it on the table. Next, and even more unwillingly, he took off his wig, which was set in the distinctive French style.

"Thank you, sir," Julian peeled out of his own coat. "I hope my coat will fit you, sir. If you wait a moment I can bring your unpowdered wig from the bedroom."

The Prince did as he was bidden, whilst Julian hurried into the bedroom and returned with the wig-case. He took out the brown wig and set and tied it into the style of his own hair. Prince Charles had already put on

Julian's coat, and he took the natural wig and set it on his head before a mirror.

"Why," exclaimed Angela, "Your Royal Highness makes a most becoming Colonel Brett. I only hope that Julian will make as fine a likeness of a Prince."

Julian put on the Prince's wig and buttoned himself into the coat. The fit was rather tight for him, and he had to leave the top buttons unfastened to manage a sit on the shoulders.

"What do you think?" he asked Angela quickly.

"At a distance, it will do, darling, but only at a distance."

"Excellent," exclaimed Julian. "So long as I can keep them at a distance, I'll put off close quarters as long as I can."

There was a knock on the door and Mrs. Boulter appeared. "All is ready, sir," she whispered. "All is ready, gentlemen. I've kept my eyes on the eel-boat and they've dropped a dinghy astern. They're rowing down river now, but I expect they'll make a circuit and come upstream when they're beneath the shadow of the walls."

"You must go, sir," urged Julian. "There's not a minute to lose. Angela, remember what I said, and you too, Mrs. Boulter. Captain Trompe will put you ashore at Gravesend. Go to the inn of Martin Brackley—the 'Gorged Swan'. You say Lady Primrose has made all the arrangements, but you must be careful how you return to London."

"Yes," agreed Angela tremulously. "I know that my mother has made what provisions she could. Doctor King will ride direct to Gravesend and wait for us." She turned to Mrs. Boulter. "Annie, your bonnet and cloak."

"They are here and handy, my lady," said Mrs. Boulter with suppressed excitement. "Are we going to leave this house with all the doors open and nobody to look after it? There won't be a thing left by the time we come back!"

"Sh!" ordered Angela. "You shall have a better house than this when His Royal Highness is safe."

"His Royal Highness," gasped Mrs. Boulter. "And I guessed it all the time!" Mrs. Boulter mastered her excitement and moved to the door. She was a sturdy, agile woman, despite her years, and came of seafaring stock, so the prospect of embarking in a boat did not alarm her.

Julian moved cautiously to the window and looked out through a chink he made in the curtains. The military, two companies of Guards, were already posted—one on the landing-stage of the Fleet Ditch and the other at the mouth of Sea-Coal Lane. Pursuivants were at every point, and he could dimly see the figure of Jem Pringle moving quickly up and down and checking their positions.

Julian closed the curtains again and came back into the centre of the room.

"Your Royal Highness, it is dangerous for you to stay any longer. Angela, whatever happens, the Prince must not fall into the hands of Hanover."

"But what are you going to do, Brett?" demanded the Prince. "You can't stop here—that's madness. I've never asked a man to do something for my sake which means his life will be taken in cold blood. Damn this



business—come with us, and if need be we'll fight our way to the boat. Let's go together, and hang the consequences!"

"Sir," implored Angela, for she caught the look of determination in Julian's face, "please do what Julian asks. This plan is by my wish. Please, sir, he does this for you because he and I know it is his duty."

"His duty," said Prince Charles slowly. "That word called 'duty' . . . and when a man's duty lies ahead and he is assured of what that duty is, no power on earth could move him from it." He held out his hand, and clasped Julian's. "It's a poor thanks I give you, Brett, but what I give and say comes from the depths of my heart. If you think I am worthy to be kept alive at this price, then I have no alternative but to accept the value you have put upon me."

Prince Charles's emotion was very great, and words failed him. He let go Julian's hand and crossed to the door. Mrs. Boulter had already opened it for him, and as he passed out he threw a glance over his shoulder. Angela was in Julian's arms. She was looking up at him and her lips moved in a silent prayer.

"Oh, Julian," she whispered. "My Julian, may God preserve you and uphold you tonight and always."

Very gently he put her away from him. "Go, Angela," he whispered. "Go, my darling. Your work and my work is not yet finished."

"I know," said Angela, and kissed him passionately. "God bless you, darling."

She moved quickly across to the door. All was ready and they must go. Julian stood watching as they disappeared. First Mrs. Boulter, then Angela, and finally Prince Charles Edward Stuart. The door closed and he caught the sound of their footsteps upon the stairs, footsteps which grew fainter and fainter and finally died away. He crossed to the mirror and carefully examined his appearance. The Prince's wig sat nicely enough and the coat certainly gave help to the impersonation. He untied and retied his cravat, leaving the points out and giving it a more flamboyant look. With the light behind him he would look like Prince Charles Stuart, but it was a difficult business. At all costs he must play for time.

He crossed to the table, took up the decanter and filled a glass of wine. Glass in hand, he walked to the window and pulled open the curtains. The candles behind him flickered and grew steady again. He gazed brazenly into the street and, raising his glass, sipped a little wine.

"Why, Brett," he called in a loud voice, "you're talking nonsense. My dear Colonel, there's nothing astir save a few mangy dogs howling at the moon. Tell the old woman to bring up another bottle of wine and we'll drink damnation to my enemies." He let the curtain fall again. This talking to himself and this imitation of the Prince was an eerie business. Yet it was no imitation at all, for he had been with Prince Charles long enough to know he was not the drunken tipster the Hanoverian scribes would report him. That would keep those fellows quiet for a bit. At all costs their attention must be distracted from the landing-stage and the eel-boat. Why on earth hadn't these Hanoverians brought a water-patrol with them? That was negligence on somebody's part.

He walked to the other side of the room and through into the Snug, which fronted on the river. Here the lights were out. Carefully he pulled back the curtains and peeped out. From this high angle he saw the dinghy from the eel-boat moving silently along the cover of the wall. There was a pursuivant standing in the shadow of the west-side wall. The man was leaning and obviously bored with his watch, but the fact that he was posted there presented tremendous difficulties. At any moment the Prince and his party would emerge from the secret passage and the boat-house, and if that fellow was to see them all would be lost. Julian deliberated. Should he take a pistol and pick him off in cold blood? No, that would be foolish. The sound of the report would bring the pursuivants upon them in an instant. He must think of something better than that. . . . Could he throw something? There was a heavy pot vase in front of the window. That would make an excellent weapon if he could be sure of hitting his mark. He picked up the vase and held it in his two hands.

There was a faint grating sound. The pursuivant turned his head towards the river.

"Who's there?" he challenged.

Julian could see that the dinghy had come alongside, but as yet it was hidden from view from the pursuivant. A couple of sailors were starting to shin up the wharf poles. He knew he must act quickly, for once the heads of these men appeared above the wharf the agent would have them at a tremendous disadvantage. He lifted the vase above his head. The pursuivant had begun to move across to the edge of the wharf. Julian threw the vase, and it landed with a muffled crash upon the planking immediately behind the agent.

"What are you doing?" shouted the pursuivant, swinging about and pulling a pistol from his pocket. "Who's there?" he shouted. "Who's there?"

The two Dutch sailors clambered over the edge of the landing-stage and, with a spring, were upon the pursuivant. His attempt to raise the alarm was smothered, and he went down with the two men on top of him.

The 'lion had been tipped'. Julian saw the two sailors straighten their backs, but the pursuivant lay still.

From the next post another pursuivant had started to challenge. "What's up, George?" he called. "Anything happened?"

There was no answer to his enquiry, but evidently the fellow did not think it important enough to follow up in person. His voice sounded a little thick and fuddled with drink.

Julian looked to the other side of the wharf. Three other figures had appeared and he saw the vague outline of them by the light of the young moon. Prince Charles Edward Stuart—Lady Angela Primrose—and Mrs. Annie Boulter.

The Dutch sailors had gone towards them, and the next moment Mrs. Boulter was over the side of the Quay and being helped down into the dinghy. Angela followed, and last came the Prince. For a moment Prince Charles stood upon the edge of the wharf. He took off his hat with a flourish in a last adieu, then he went rapidly over the edge of the Quay and disappeared

from sight. The dinghy shot away from under the quay, and muffled oars took it rapidly and noiselessly to the side of the eel-boat. Julian strained his ears, but there was no challenge from the shore. The dinghy made a circuit and came up on the farther side of the eel-boat and was lost to view. Already the vessel's sails were being shaken out and a nice breeze from the west filled them rapidly. There were no shouts or orders, but the creak of the capstan told that the anchor was being raised. Now the boat was moving, imperceptibly at first, but as the wind got hold in the sails she started to glide forward.

Julian breathed a sigh of relief. Now the eel-boat was under way little was likely to stop her. The Hanoverians could chance a shot across her bows, but Captain Trompe had the reputation of being a fearless seaman, and nothing, save a boarding-party with pike and cutlass, would throw him off his course.

"Good-bye, Angela," whispered Julian. "Good-bye, my love—until we meet again. Good-bye, Prince Charles, until you come back again."

He let drop the curtain and picked his way across the darkened Snug. He reached the dining-room, and the candlelight blinded him for a moment. He picked up his glass and crossed again to the window, and, throwing back the curtains, looked out.

"No, Brett," he called, "you talk rubbish and nonsense! She has not come. Let's crack another bottle. Fill up the glasses and a toast. Drink and women are the same. Yes, Brett. If either plays you false, why, change to another vintage."

There was movement in the road now. Glass in hand, Julian peered down on the scene beneath him. A muffled order and the companies of Guards came to attention. A low whistle and the pursuivants who had been hiding in the doorways moved out into the roadway.

"Come on, my hearties!" yelled the voice of Jem Pringle. "Come on, my hearties! That house with the light in it."

The pursuivants came across the lane at a rush; they reached the door and began thumping upon it.

"Open in the King's name! Open in the name of the law! Open in the name of the King!"

A dozen voices shouted the demand, and, finding no response, Pringle sought for other ways of gaining entry. One man brought an axe, another a crowbar, and a third a sledgehammer.

"Break it down!" shouted Pringle. "Smash down the door!"

The blows on the stout oak door came thick and fast, the crash of the axe, the heavy thump of the sledgehammer and the breaking, splintering sound as the crowbar was driven in. No wood could hold up to such force.

Julian heard the crash and knew that the door was broken in. Men were shouting, Jem Pringle yelling a dozen different orders and heavy footsteps thumped upon the stairway.

Julian listened. They were coming up the stairs towards the dining-room. He moved calmly back to the table and refilled his glass. The wine overflowed the rim of the glass and, with a smile, he dipped his fingers into it and touched the back of his ears. The legend was that spilt wine applied

in this way would ward off the hangman's rope. He needed such a charm in his present position. He raised his glass.

"To the King!" he toasted. "To the King over the water!"

As he drank he could hear heavy breathing on the other side of the door.

"Open in the name of the King!" challenged the voice of Jem Pringle.

"Open it yourself!" shouted back Julian. "Turn the handle; it's not locked, or bolted, or barred! So you can spare your pains of breaking down other folks' property." He set down his glass and turned to face the door as it was burst open.

Pringle and half a dozen pursuivants came crowding into the room. They halted, and stood in an arc with the door behind them with their leader in the centre. Pringle was so overcome with his triumph he could hardly speak.

"Prince Charles Edward Stuart, styling yourself as Prince of Wales, I arrest you in the name of the King."

Julian bowed with his hand on his heart. "Indeed, sir," he said calmly. "Have you any proof in your assertion?"

"I don't need proof," blustered Pringle. "We've caught you red-handed, Prince Charles, and we're not going to let you go in a hurry, though, being a Royal Highness, I've orders to treat you gently, provided there's no nonsense." He made a gesture towards the pursuivants, who were glaring at Julian.

"Oh, pipe down, Jem!" grumbled one of the pursuivants. "Let's get him under lock and key before he slips us again, same as he did in the Highlands."

"You hold your tongue, sailor," ordered Pringle. He moved towards Julian. "You can't blame me for this, your Royal Highness. You've brought it on yourself," he said half apologetically, his eyes peering at his prisoner, who had the light behind him.

"I don't blame anybody," said Julian evenly. "In fact, I'm very grateful to you." He laughed. "The only pity is that you and your mates are not better acquainted with the appearance of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales."

"What do you mean?" demanded Pringle anxiously. "I don't understand Your Royal Highness."

Julian continued to smile. "I mean that clothes don't make the man."

A look of distrust was coming into the faces of the pursuivants. This spectacular arrest was not following the lines they expected. They began to murmur and glance at one another out of the corners of their eyes. Only Jem Pringle was standing his ground.

"No good talking in riddles, sir," he grumbled. "I've my duty to do."

"I'm not talking riddles." Julian shook his head. "I'm talking plain honest fact, Mr. Pringle."

"Mr. Pringle!" echoed Pringle. "How the hell do you know my name, sir?"

"Because," said Julian, "you and I have met before, Jem Pringle. And you're even a bigger fool than I thought you were."

With a quick movement he swept off the Prince's wig. "Julian Brett," he said with a bow. "Yes, Jem Pringle, I am Julian Brett, Honorary Colonel in the Army of King James of Britain, and at your service."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### H.M. GOVERNMENT IS AT A LOSS

FOREIGNERS have accused the British of taking their pleasures sombrely, but certainly London became quite hilarious at the discomfiture of Mr. Pelham's 'Broad Bottom' Administration. Undoubtedly from top to bottom they had made a *faux pas*, and it was rumoured that H.M. King George was in such a state of fury that his physician hourly expected a devastating attack of apoplexy to overtake the monarch.

Of course, declared Mr. Pelham, it was all the fault of that fool Cooper, and this opinion was agreed heartily by their Graces the Duke of Dorset, the Duke of Newcastle, the Duke of Grafton, the Duke of Richmond and the Duke of Argyle, whilst other members of the Cabinet were equally enthusiastic in belling the Cooper cat. Even the mild Duke of Montague added his strictures, and His Grace of Bedford relaxed a little of the time he was giving in paying court to the King's favourite, the Countess of Yarmouth, to declare that this fellow Cooper was a 'consummate ass'.

The policy of British government has always been to find a scapegoat, and, with the Earl of Cooper floundering hopelessly in his embarrassment, he was the obvious Aunt Sally. However, his final effort was the one which gave London its loudest laugh. In the *Gazette*, the official organ of the Government, there appeared the announcement that a person named Julian Brett had been apprehended by the pursuivants of H.M. Solicitor-General and his crime had been that he had masqueraded as no other person than Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender. The *Gazette* went on to declare the rumours current in London and elsewhere that the Pretender had come to England were completely false, and that the audacity and impertinence of this person Julian Brett had been the cause of all the public disquiet. The whole situation was so fantastically illogical, for if Brett had indeed masqueraded as His Royal Highness Prince Charles, obviously his treason was against the House of Stuart and not that of Hanover.

In St. James's Street and Pall Mall the Tory partisans were quick to make the greatest possible play of the situation. They declared the Administration had published an old wives' tale which nobody could believe, and demanded the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Bub Dodginton was quickly into the fray and, as Baron of Melcombe Regis, he tabled a whole series of questions which were carefully conceived to add to ministerial embarrassment. But there was worse to come. The mob, the *hoi polloi* of London's back alleys, joined by the small traders and

artisans, raised a clamour against the discomfited Whigs. The rights of the subject had been infringed upon. They declared for liberty; and Julian Brett, incarcerated in Newgate, became the hero of the hour. The carriages and chairs of the élite mixed with the populace, which spent hours outside the prison on the offchance of seeing this notable prisoner. Major Power, the Governor, refused to gratify these desires, so the cheers, counter-cheers and the cat-calls of these enthusiasts continued all hours of the day and many of the night.

The whole situation was in a flux. For long enough the people of London had been crying out because of the cost of bread and the conditions of poverty, and they attached themselves to the Tory Party and noisily demanded a change of government. The supposed coming of Prince Charles to London and the arrest of this Julian Brett had caused a swing-over of political opinion which was ominous.

The last thing that King George wanted was a change of government. The Whigs were now nicely tamed to maintaining a balance of power in Europe by means of 'King George's Golden Horsemen', and they granted such subsidies as were demanded for His Majesty's impecunious relations with only a minimum of protest. If the Tories were to come into power, King George knew he would be faced with another and very difficult situation. Therefore he penned a note in his own royal hand and despatched it to the Lord Chancellor with instructions to bring his wishes to the notice of the Solicitor-General. The royal missive intimated to Lord Cooper it was His Majesty's pleasure that the person Brett should be arraigned and tried for high treason, and as, owing to the restlessness of public opinion, a jury could not be trusted, the trial should take place before three judges of the High Court. Lord Hardwicke endorsed the note with his firm handwriting and sent it onwards to Lord Cooper.

Outside Somerset House the mob were demonstrating. They had carried an effigy of Julian Brett shoulder-high to the Temple Bar, and now, having lighted a large bonfire, for which they had used a considerable number of the goods and chattels of law-abiding citizens of Fleet Street, they were dancing and jeering about it. The gin-shops were open and quantities of liquor had brought about a false and dangerous hilarity.

Inside Somerset House, and in the office of the Solicitor-General, Lord Cooper dabbed his forehead with his handkerchief and gazed morosely at His Majesty's instructions. He realized from it that he would be required to frame the indictment and to assure the conviction of Julian Brett, but whilst nothing would give him greater pleasure than to see Brett condemned, his lordship was beginning to appreciate mounting difficulties with considerable self-pity.

A further note from Lord Hardwicke made it abundantly clear that 'Cooper's political future would hang alone on his ability to have this fellow Brett hanged'.

"Johnson," snapped his lordship, quite forgetting that the clerk had already been discharged from his service. "Johnson!" he bawled. "Johnson, damn you, fellow, where are you?"

The door opened and Jem Pringle appeared.

"Pardon, your lordship," he said briskly.

"What the devil do you want?" shouted Cooper furiously.

Pringle pulled his forelock. "Well, sir—my lord—if I might make so bold, I have just returned from the precincts of Newgate Gaol, where there is a considerable concourse of people gathered. They are shouting and cheering for this person Julian Brett, and I was wondering if I had your lordship's permission to call up the Dragoons and disperse them."

"No," snorted Lord Cooper. "We'll show no more force, Pringle. Last time I gave you soldiers you made an inconceivable idiot of yourself at the Fleet Ditch. Next time you have soldiers they'll mount guard on the scaffold, when I hang you."

Pringle gulped, and with some adroitness switched the conversation.

"It always seems remarkable to me, my lord, that people should make such a hero out of a criminal. Take this fellow Brett, for instance. Here he is in Newgate Gaol, and before very long he'll be hung, drawn and quartered with his legs and head and arms nicely pitched and decorating the gates of London. I just can't understand it. And suppose we don't hang him?—well, in a night he'll be forgotten."

"If we don't hang him," said Cooper ominously, "we shall hang you. Get that fact firmly into your head."

"Yes, my lord," said Pringle, and glanced longingly towards the door.

"What about that other matter?" asked Lord Cooper.

"You mean the marriage of Lady Angela Primrose to Brett, my lord?"

"Yes," said Lord Cooper.

Pringle fished into his pocket and took out a paper. "This was found on the prisoner when he was searched." He put the paper face up upon the table, and his lordship discovered to his inward fury he was reading a marriage certificate issued for the marriage of Julian Brett and Lady Angela Primrose, which had been solemnized by the Reverend Doctor Arnold King and witnessed by none other than His Royal Highness Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

"This is illegal!" shouted Cooper.

"Why, yes, my lord," agreed Pringle humbly. "But all the same, sir, I don't see how we can make it public."

"Why not?" demanded Lord Cooper.

Pringle moistened his lips and hesitated. "My lord, the signature of Prince Charles Edward Stuart is on that paper, and, seeing the Government don't admit that he's been in London at all, the publication might be very embarrassing."

"Get out!" stormed Cooper. "Get out of my sight. You blithering idiot—you muddling fool! Out, I say! Out with you!"

Pringle turned and beat a hasty retreat to the door, but he was not quick enough for his lordship, who leapt to his feet, sprang round the desk and, catching the pursuivant just before he made the door, gave him a resounding kick in the seat of his pants.

"My lord!" gasped Pringle. "My lord—and after my devoted service!"

"You go to hell!" shouted Lord Cooper, and slammed the door shut in his face.

Lord Cooper certainly had a great deal to think about. The examination of Brett at Newgate Gaol had brought no evidence of any sort. He wished fervently that he had been Solicitor-General in the reign of Good Queen Bess, when sterner and sharper measures such as Francis Bacon might have used could have been employed to make the fellow talk. He wondered as he paced up and down the room whether he should go to Newgate. Even if the fellow was a prisoner and facing trial for high treason, his lordship did not relish such an interview. However, he had another matter to consider, and that was the Lady Angela. Once Brett was dead, she would become a widow, and widows could marry again. The large possessions which would be her *dot* would remain intact, and, moreover, he could so tighten the screw upon the nervous Lord Primrose as to force him to give his daughter's hand. He became a little happier at this thought. He could keep the fires of official suspicion nice and bright against Lord Primrose and thereby have a sufficient lever to pull off the coup. All that remained was the removal of Brett, and if his lordship knew his pleadings and the rigmarole of the operation of the law of treason, that would not be a very difficult matter.

He took snuff elegantly. That was just as he wished. Why hadn't he thought of it before? None of the Tory lords would reach out a hand to save the fellow—he was quite certain of that.

Content with these thoughts, Lord Cooper reseated himself at his desk. He would write a polite note to Lady Primrose and have it despatched immediately. He would go to Primrose House—they dare not refuse him an entrance—and make himself pleasant. He pulled a piece of paper towards him, took up a pen and began to write. When he had finished he read the missive carefully, pounced it and shook it dry. This done, he rang the hand-bell twice, and a messenger in the livery of the Solicitor-General's office appeared in the doorway.

"Take this to my Lady Primrose," ordered Cooper.

"Very good, my lord."

The man took the note, bowed and left the room.

Lord Cooper took snuff again. He was glad that he had taken this step. His own personal fortune was in no good state. His habits had been extravagant and he had already intimated to his creditors that they would not have very much longer to wait for satisfaction, as he was making a brilliant match. Obviously he was taking the right course. If Angela had had her Brett—or, at least, he supposed she had had—he would not be so squeamish.

Lord Cooper raised his head. He thought he heard a knock upon the door. He listened intently, and the timorous knock was repeated.

"Come in!" ordered Cooper. "Come in with you! Must I fit an ear-trumpet to my ear to hear you? Come in!"

The handle moved and the door opened slowly.

"Good lord!" he ejaculated.

Lady Angela Primrose stood in the doorway. She was dressed very sombrelly and appeared to be in the height of distress.

"Angela! What on earth are you doing here?" he demanded, and jumped to his feet. "Come in, and don't stand there looking like a ghost, I'm not going to eat you. My dear, you're the last person I expected to see.



Why, I have just written to your lady-mother. I asked the honour of being able to visit you, and it seems my prayer has been answered."

Angela took a step forward and hesitated. She knew Cooper in this bantering mood; he was even more dangerous and unpleasant than when he was scowling.

"Come, my dear, what's the reason of this honour?"

Angela raised her eyes and looked steadily at him. "Lord Cooper," she said quietly, and, with a little gesture, refused the chair which he offered.

"Lord Cooper! Need we be so official?"

"Yes," said Angela, "because I have come here on official business."

"Official business? No, my dear Angela, I'll not have it. Let's talk of some lighter things—a sunny day, the flowers in the park, the hats from Vienna? The latest breath of scandal?" He dropped his voice. "Have you heard that——"

She cut him short. "Lord Cooper, I have come here to see you as Solicitor-General, because I understand you are the person to whom I must make application. My husband is held prisoner in His Majesty's Prison at Newgate. I come to ask you as Solicitor-General for a paper authorizing me to visit him."

"Your husband, Angela?" sneered Cooper. "Heavens, girl, get that out of your head. It's past and gone. He's a criminal, a man who's to stand his trial for the first offence against the realm. Why, you're as good as a widow already, and the day will come when you'll thank His Majesty's judges for ridding you of your folly."

"Sir," she protested, "that is not a matter of which the Solicitor-General should speak. I do not wish to hear the views of Lord Cooper, and as, unfortunately, the two persons are rolled into one, I plead you to keep to the powers of your official position, and leave out your observations as a private—er—gentleman. I wish for a paper to see my husband in Newgate."

Cooper scowled. "And I refuse to give it to you."

"Under what right?" asked Angela evenly.

Cooper raised his voice. "I am not hear to bandy words with you as to rights, wrongs or reasons. I tell you, Lady Angela, I refuse to give you a paper of entrance into Newgate Gaol. Let that be sufficient for you."

"It is not sufficient for me," she retorted. "You have no right to separate a woman from her husband. Under the law of England, whatever his crime, I may see him. Do you deny that?"

Cooper's anger was rising. "I do not deny or admit anything. I give you blank refusal."

"But I must see my husband. I will go to the King, if necessary, and plead with him. I will shout your action from the house-tops. You cannot refuse! I have precedent on my side. A woman may see her husband."

The door was still open. When Angela had come in she had left it ajar, and in the heat of the words that passed neither she nor Lord Cooper had noticed this. Now it had opened further and an elderly gentleman, dressed in the somewhat severe dark clothes of a lawyer, was standing framed in the doorway.

"I demand to see my husband, Julian Brett," cried Angela.

"And I refuse to give you that permission," interrupted Cooper. "Lady Angela, you waste my time and yours. I would advise you to return at once to your parents' roof. That is my final word."

The gentleman in the doorway moved forward. Angela's back was turned towards him, and he came so much to the left of Cooper that the Solicitor-General had failed to notice his presence. Moreover, the gentleman's approach was noiseless and catlike.

"My lord," he said quietly.

Cooper turned, and so did Angela.

"My Lord Hardwicke!"

Lord Hardwicke bowed stiffly to Angela and turned to face Lord Cooper.

"Cooper, my dear fellow, I am afraid I have overheard a little of your conversation with this lady. As Lord Chancellor of England, perhaps you will permit me to point out that you are wrong in the interpretation of the law." His voice was silky, and without expression.

"How do you mean, sir?" asked Cooper, blustering.

"I mean that you and I are not here to make laws, but to interpret them. The Lady Angela Primrose, whom I take this young lady to be, has asked you, as Solicitor-General, for a permit and order to visit her husband, Julian Brett, at present held prisoner in Newgate."

"Yes, my lord, but——"

Lord Hardwicke held up his hand to command silence. "We must leave our personal feelings out of this, William. The law of England says that a man and woman joined in holy wedlock are one. Therefore we have no right to keep them apart. If you are satisfied that Brett and the Lady Angela are married, you have no other course save to grant the paper which she asks."

"Thank you, my lord," breathed Angela.

Lord Hardwicke regarded her sternly. "Young lady, please understand that I do not in any way condone what you have done, or your marriage with this person Brett. I reserve my own judgment upon it, and likewise my strictures. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I overheard my Lord Cooper interpreting bad law, and, being a jurist and in the interests of our highly honoured profession, I took the liberty to point out to him, as my learned brother, the course of action which he must pursue. Make out the paper, William, and give it to her. Remember that she could recourse to a Judge in Chambers to receive the self-same permission should you withhold it."

Lord Cooper humped himself down in his chair. He took up a pen and scratched furiously as he wrote. "There you are," he said. "Present that at the gate of the gaol. It is addressed to Major Power, the Governor." He held out the permit and Angela came forward and took it. She bobbed a half-curtsey to their lordships.

"If I might bid you good day, my lords," she whispered, and, to hide her embarrassment, turned and hurried from the room.

The Lord Chancellor watched Angela's departure and turned acidly to Lord Cooper.

"William," he said slowly, "you must not let your heart get too far into this. Let's hang Brett first, and when you've done that there'll be plenty

of time ; though goodness knows, save for money, why you want to tie yourself to this Jacobite wasp-nest." He sighed. "I've just seen the Prime Minister," he continued, seating himself on the edge of a Queen Anne settee and gazing thoughtfully at his buckled shoes. "The cat's among the pigeons with a vengeance. However, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. Miss Clementina Walkinshaw has left the protection of the roof of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales and taken herself and her baggage northwards. Mr. Secretary Cresset told me this morning in the club. His Majesty spoke personally to Her Royal Highness on the matter."

"That's one relief, sir."

"Yes," agreed the Lord Chancellor. "There's only one matter that perplexes me. Do you think it was possible for Prince Charles to have made contact with her while he was in London? That fellow Cresset's very deep, but he's damned clever. He swears he did."

Cooper pursed his lips. "How would Cresset have such information?"

"Heaven alone knows!" said Lord Hardwicke. "Meantime, we will stick to our guns. The Government maintains that Charles Stuart never was in London."

William Cooper, glancing idly at the papers on his desk, suddenly fixed his eyes upon the marriage licence.

Lord Hardwicke saw that his attention was riveted. "What's that paper, William?" he enquired pointedly.

Cooper covered himself quickly. "Nothing, sir, nothing," he assured. "Just a paper that Pringle brought in today. Not of the very slightest importance, I assure you, sir." He took up the licence and pushed it hurriedly into a drawer of the desk.

"I wonder," said Lord Hardwicke, and took snuff.

"What are you wondering, sir?" asked Cooper meekly.

"Lots of things, and amongst them, William, how such a bad liar as yourself ever thought fit to go into politics."

. . . . .

Whilst Lord Cooper and the Lord Chancellor were in conference, at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile from Somerset House Mrs. Bette Hilton was thoroughly enjoying herself. In the first instance, the immaculate, the handsome and the very rich Sir Guy Stanley had once again asked her to marry him, and she, with the inconstancy of woman, had accepted his proposal. Now, in a rather amused state of mind, she regarded Guy and wondered just what was going on in the back of his mind. His adoration had been complete and long. He had proposed perhaps a hundred times, and received his refusal like a man. Now he had an acceptance to toy with.

"Yes, Guy," she sighed, "you know, I've been thinking it all over. My acting days have reached their height, so now I am content to leave my public for the adoration of one man."

"Why, yes, Bette," said Guy with considerable alacrity. "That's what I've always wanted, and now—why, you'll be able to leave the stage, and that great house in Somerset, my tenants and dependants, will be able to share your charm with me."

Forgetting the perfection of her make-up, Bette wrinkled her nose. "Like a courtier, Guy—like a courtier," she teased him, and, bending, kissed him lavishly on the mouth.

However, she had her misgivings about Unthank Hall, a pile as vast as Drury Lane, with its fifty indoor servants and near on two hundred rooms. She wondered how the play-actress would go down with the Somerset County.

"And now we'll have to think about an heir," said Guy artlessly.

Bette Hilton, with the caution bred of the 'boards', countered smartly.

"We'll think of getting married first, Guy."

Guy Stanley became suffused with confusion. "My darling Bette, of course we will! It was only a *façon de parler*. You know I adore you—you're the most wonderful, pure, charming, delightful, amusing, exquisite female in all the world!"

"Yes," agreed Bette, "and the cleverest, too." She slipped out of his arms and walked across her drawing-room. At the farther side, between the long windows which looked out into Catherine Street, was a table, and upon this lay a heap of news-sheets. She picked up four of these and brought them back to Guy. Fanning them out, she placed on his knee the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, the *Daily Courant* and the *Guardian*, and on the front page of each of these was a carefully crayon-marked paragraph, which ran as follows:

"A man of gossip who is usually well informed tells us that Mr. Pelham is indeed an adroit man, for, being in the midst of many complexes and unable to satisfy the wishes of the House of Hanover, he has allowed a high-placed member of the House of Stuart to come to London and be in readiness. Therefore, it would seem to be, as our gossip would inform us, that Britain may expect a change of King but hardly one of Government. To this end, it is supposed that a young lady much respected and admired in a certain Stuart quarter has already taken up her residence in a royal establishment, so that if and when the change-over takes place she will be nicely at hand."

Guy Stanley read the insertion in the *Tatler* and wrinkled his aristocratic nose.

"I wrote that," said Bette, with considerable pride. She pressed a forefinger into a spot on her cheek where she knew a dimple lurked. "Mr. Pelham has been very nasty to Mr. Garrick over the licence for Drury Lane, and I thought I would get even with him, so I wrote this out very carefully. It took me such a long while, and I sent it to all the news-sheets. Wasn't it extraordinary? Every one of them published it."

"I'm not surprised at that," said Guy cautiously. "My dear, you've put the cat amongst the pigeons this time. The 'Broad Bottom' Administration can't ignore the attack. They'll have to do something about it."

"That's what I want them to do," retorted Bette Hilton, with a show of spirit. "Don't you see, these Whigs have it too much their own way. I wanted to frighten them a little. And you remember how nasty Mr. Pelham was when Mr. Garrick put up the price of seats for the gallery at the Theatre Royal."

Guy Stanley, who remembered vaguely the footmen's riot and how the Dragoons had been called out to restore order at Drury Lane when the new prices were imposed, shrugged his shoulders.

"Now you're cross with me," said Bette. "Guy, I'm disappointed with you! Anyway, that sour oaf William Cooper is far too pleased with himself. Poor little Angela Primrose—what a fate if she had been tied to a man like that!" She rippled a laugh. "Why, Cooper couldn't forget his own importance, not even on his wedding night."

"I see," said Guy. "Bette, come here."

She slid on to the arm of his chair and nestled up against him. "Yes?"

"Listen to me, sweetheart. You may have annoyed Cooper. Probably you've hurt him in the eyes of his political associates; but you've done something more than that, my pet."

"What's that?" asked Bette quickly.

"Julian Brett was arrested last night at the Fleet Ditch. Haven't you seen the broadsheets this morning?"

Bette yawned. She pleaded that the theatre had played late on the previous night—and besides, she had gone on to a party at the Cochrane's. Consequently she had slept a little later than usual, and, anyway, she rarely read the news-sheets until the evening. She was sorry that Julian Brett had been arrested, but her view on the matter was that people who played with fire usually burnt their fingers in the end. From what she had heard, young Brett was a fire-eater.

"Yes," agreed Stanley. "But let me tell you something more, my dearest. Brett was arrested for masquerading as Prince Charles Stuart. The Government deny that His Royal Highness has ever been in London at all—or England, for that matter."

"What rubbish!" said Bette indignantly. "Why, even the orange-sellers know that he's been here."

"All the more reason for Mr. Pelham and his friends to deny it. Personally, I think that Brett saved the Prince by masquerading as him in the last moments when the net was closing round. This game of chess which the Stuarts and the Hanovers play, what a business it is! The winner puts the crown on his head and the loser has no head to put it on."

"Stop talking in riddles!"

"Tut, tut, tut!" whispered Guy, and nibbled the lobe of Bette's ear. "Let me solve one for you, dear. Listen, my sweet. Julian Brett was married to your little friend Angela Primrose."

"Good lord! When?" Bette leapt to her feet. She was all excitement. "What's this you're saying? Angela married Julian Brett! Oh, you scandal-monger!"

"It's the truth," said Guy. "My aunt Mary Primrose told me. I happened to pass Primrose House and found her in a mixture of the vapours, hysterics and tears, and having penetrated this defence I had the reason of it. Brett and Angela were married two days ago. The Reverend Doctor King performed the ceremony and His Royal Highness Prince Charles signed as witness."

"But, heavens, Guy, where do I come into all this?" she exclaimed. "How is it tied on to me?"

"Because," said Guy, "you're the responsible party. Because you want to annoy the Administration you write your little piece and send it to the papers. That forces the Government's hand, and poor Brett is arrested masquerading as the Prince. Now your darling Angela looks out on a grey future. Her husband is in Newgate Gaol, with every chance of being hanged, drawn and quartered for treason, and she is inconsolable! All because Mrs. Bette Hilton—that most charming actress—throws off the motley and becomes a scribe."

"Oh!" gasped Bette. "Do you mean that I've harmed poor Angela? Guy, I wouldn't do it for the world. It's terrible! I must help her—it's only right I should help her. All because I was a silly vain woman I wrote that paragraph and brought such calamity to my dearest friend." In her agitation she began to pace up and down the room. She would do something, she was responsible, and it was her duty to unravel this tangled skein. Newgate Gaol? . . . Julian Brett, the husband of Angela, lying there for treason, a prisoner and beneath the shadow of the scaffold!

Bette dabbed away a tear with an entirely inadequate handkerchief. "Guy, I must go to Angela. That's the only course for me." She raised her voice. "Molly," she called. "Molly Mills, come here at once! Fetch me my wrap, a scarf, my purse, and order my chair immediately. Tell those Irish louts to bring it at the double."

"But where are you going?" demanded Guy, alarmed at this sudden show of activity.

"Why, to Primrose House, stupid! Yes, at once—immediately." She repeated her orders to the portly Mills, who arrived panting from the lower regions and was all anxiety to see to her mistress's requirements.

"Bette, my sweet, only a minute ago you said you would marry me, and now you are leaving me as flat as a pancake," wailed Guy Stanley.

"You'll be flatter than a pancake if I don't get Mr. Julian Brett out of gaol," retorted Bette, seizing her wrap out of Mills's hands.

"Out of Newgate!" gasped Guy. But before he could protest further Bette, in a flush of skirts and petticoats and streaming cloak, was out of the door and down the steps into Catherine Street, shouting orders to her Irish chairmen as she went.

. . . . .

Mrs. Hilton's arrival at Primrose House was certainly unexpected. His lordship was in the library, and her ladyship was in the Blue drawing-room. A voluntary isolation brought about because since the *débâcle* at the Fleet Ditch they had scarcely been on speaking terms.

A harassed Boulter, who had already received express instructions that the Lady Angela was not to be disturbed on any pretext, tried his utmost to repel the caller. But Mrs. Hilton was made of sterner stuff. She had ducked under his deterrent arm and was up the stairs to Angela's bed-chamber before the major-domo realized fully what had occurred.

"Angela!" called Bette, bursting in upon her. "Angela, my sweet, my darling, I know what has happened. You need not explain."

Angela raised a tear-stained face and gazed unhappily at Bette. Since her interview with Lord Cooper she had remained in a state of unhappiness and beset with a thousand fears, which even the devotion of the faithful Evans could not dispel.

"What can I do?" said Angela with an effort. "Bette darling, what can I do? They have him in prison—they are going to kill him, tear him to pieces. Oh, Bette, if they do it, my heart will burst inside me."

"But, darling, we mustn't let them do it," declared Bette with conviction. "That's why I've come here. You and I must think and scheme and plot. Love laughs at locksmiths."

"Yes," said Angela, but the tone of her voice showed how unconvinced she was. She made a gesture with her hands for Evans to withdraw, but Bette countermanded the order. It was better for Evans to stop; she was sorry she had not brought Mills as well. This was a case where four heads would be better than two.

A paper which Angela was holding in her hand dropped from her grasp, and before she could stoop and gather it up again Bette had seized upon it.

"Why," she exclaimed, "you have permission to go inside the gaol! Do you mean you've been to Cooper? That you've bearded the lion in his den?"

"Yes," said Angela numbly. "My duty was to try to do something."

"You brave girl!" exclaimed Bette, and began to read the order carefully. "Angela," she said, "look. Cooper has worded this very carelessly. It instructs Major Power to admit the Lady Angela Brett, wife of Julian Brett, and her attendant. But look, my dear, there is a nice space between the word 'attendant' and the full stop that follows it. Suppose we were to put in just one little 's'. Do you see what I mean?" She held out the paper so that Angela could view it more closely. "I write an 's' just like Cooper does. Now, suppose you and I and Evans and Mills were all to go together? Don't you see, my dear? Why, there's no flaw in it. Four women would be such a bevy to count. Purses well filled with gold, and bright eyes to throw knowing glances to those pig-faced gaolers?"

"Bette, what are you talking about? You don't mean you're thinking of a scheme to rescue him?"

Bette Hilton threw back her head and laughed. "An actress must play many roles. Don't forget my mother was also an actress, and she, with the redoubtable Lady Nithesdale, snatched his lordship from the Tower of London on the very eve of his execution. My dear, you must remember? Nithesdale was to die for the part he played in the Rising of the 'Fifteen. Angela, I've already told you love laughs at locksmiths, and remember history has a strange habit of repeating itself."

"Bette!" exclaimed Angela, and with a cry she jumped to her feet and threw her arms about Bette Hilton. "Oh, Bette . . . !"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

## ESCAPE TO HAPPINESS

HIS MAJESTY'S PRISON of Newgate had a long and dolorous reputation, for its main use was to house criminals and offenders prior to their trial and to provide a last place of incarceration for those condemned to die. The whole place was gloomy and high-walled, and in the year 1750 none of the later improvements had been brought about. The position of the prison was close to the Old Bailey and abutting on to Giltspur Street with Warwick Lane skirting about its south side. Certainly those who constructed the prison did not intend escapes to be effected, and from the time of Sir Richard Whittington onwards there had been many alterations; none of these were for the better housing of the prisoners, but all to keep them safer held. A gloomy place, if ever there was one, and when the weekly execution day arrived, on which malefactors were conveyed from the prison to die on the notorious Tyburn Tree, huge throngs of the populace would jostle and fill the streets to cheer on the poor condemned wretches, to offer them drink and counsel them to be of good heart. The English liked their criminals to die well, and if a criminal showed fear on the gallows he was the object of universal contempt and abuse. Outside the prison the pamphleteers plied their trade with considerable success. When a notorious traitor, murderer or malefactor was apprehended and lodged inside the prison, these fellows hawked lurid broadsheets, which described the deeds of the prisoner. These were the most scurrilous pieces of journalism, and arrived wet from the printers, with their ink still smearing, to be sold to all who were gullible enough to buy.

Though Julian Brett had not lain forty-eight hours in Newgate, these vampires were already busy. A special sheet had been printed in his honour, and this, ignoring the Government's statement that Prince Charles Stuart had never been in London, dealt with a series of episodes which were claimed the whole truth of 'The Notorious Masquerade.'

"The Treason of Julian Brett," shouted the pamphleteers. "The Great Masquerade of this Horrible Adventurer. . . . The Marriage of the Prisoner and Lady Angela Primrose. . . . Price one halfpenny. . . ."

The sight-seers bought willingly, and read with avidity, speaking the story aloud for those of their mates who could not read. Fat matrons jostled with buxom wenches, and City clerks came eagerly in search of sensation to argue and scabble with apprentices and cheap-jacks.

There was no particular sensation at the time, no great criminal was held at the Tower of London, and so, improving upon the shining hour, the pamphleteers made Julian Brett their hero of the moment. All day long they shouted their wares, and fresh and more scurrilous pamphlets were constantly appearing from clandestine printing presses, by means of which Tory opinion was seeking to take a full measure of profit from the discomfited 'Broad Bottom' Administration.

Inside the walls of Newgate prisoners knew little or nothing of what was



taking place. They lived in a world of their own, hemmed in by iron bars, heavy doors and bolts. The gaolers were of the worst possible type; some of them were time-served men from the army, others discharged prisoners, and a third section came from the criminal inmates of the prison. No matter what the origin of the warders, their ambition was always the same, which was to make as much money as possible out of the unfortunates they held in bondage. Every privilege, however small, had to be paid for at an exorbitant rate. Even the merest necessities of life were charged for on a sliding scale, and prisoners, without means, were forced to carry out their own set tasks and then those of the monied inmates to obtain miserable pittance with which to buy food.

In construction the prison consisted first of what was called 'the common side', which was made up of two sub-sections known as the 'Lion's Den' and the 'Middle Dark'. Here the 'baser sort' were confined, and these dungeons were the scene of terrible sufferings, for into these dreadful places men and women were thrust indiscriminately, and overcrowding and squalor did not allow for virtue or human decency. Secondly, for those who had money to buy the privilege, the Press Yard was available. This was the centre part of the prison and was somewhat better constructed, cleaner and less crowded than the 'common side'. And thirdly, for the highest class of prisoner and the richest, certain rooms were reserved in the annexe of the Governor's house itself. Major Power saw a way of adding to his income by the letting of these rooms, and the rates demanded were higher than the most exclusive lodgings in London.

Treason was considered a crime apart, and those indicted and imprisoned on the count were kept away from the ordinary criminals. This was a political measure, for the Government did not wish seditious views to be expounded amongst common felons who, if they did not go to the gallows, would in due time be released and become more often than not leaders of the popular mob.

When Julian had been brought to Newgate, special orders had come from the office of the Solicitor-General instructing Major Power to place him under his own and personal custody. The Prison Governor had demurred a little at this instruction, but when Pringle disclosed that the prisoner had something in the region of a hundred guineas on him when he was taken, the Major obeyed these instructions and fixed a price suitable to himself. If Julian paid ten guineas a week, he could have a small room in the gateway, and here he must eat and sleep and have his being; but very soon he learnt that the price for this meagre accommodation was only the beginning of his liabilities. He was expected to buy his own food, unless he wished to eat the villainous messes which were the prison fare. Another half-guinea a day was demanded if he was not to have his legs 'ironed', which fee was supposedly to pay an extra guard. If he wished to buy beer or wine for himself, or any other luxury, he was also expected to treat the warders who went out to fetch his requirements. Finally, even water to wash with and tallow candles were charged against him at exorbitant rates.

Though he had only been in Newgate for a very short time he realized that his resources were rapidly dwindling, and his own especial gaoler, a

hunchbacked wretch who rejoiced in the name of Tobias Proud, informed him leeringly that if his supply of money should come to an end he would be immediately shackled and sent to the deepest and most horrible dungeon the establishment possessed.

Since Julian's arrest he had had no communication of any sort with the outer world. Twice he had been summoned to appear before the Governor and to be interrogated by the gloating Jem Pringle. But as these interviews resulted in no information being gleaned, Major Power reported to His Majesty's Secretary that the prisoner was obstinate and obdurate, and suggested that he should be brought to his trial with the least possible delay.

Moreover, Major Power added a note to his report stating that in his opinion such animosity existed between Pringle and the prisoner that interrogation should not be carried on by this pursuivant.

His Grace the Duke of Newcastle received the Governor's observations and sent them with his own comments to Lord Cooper. He instructed that the case for the Crown was to be prepared immediately and stated that the sooner this fellow Brett was condemned and executed the better he would be pleased. So H.M. Solicitor-General cursed Pringle once again and began laboriously to prepare the case for the prosecution.

. . . . .

Julian's agony of mind increased as the hours passed on. He wondered if Prince Charles was safely away. Nobody gave him any information on this subject, and he knew that the official policy was to deny that the Prince had ever come to London at all. He wondered how Mrs. Boulter had fared and what had taken place at Gravesend. Had she been able to make her way back to London? But paramount in all his thoughts was Angela. Every moment of the day he thought about her. His whole mind was wrapped up in her alone, and so intense was he in his adoration he almost failed to realize the starkness of his own position. Had she returned safely to Primrose House? Was she in London? He broached the question of smuggling out a message to Tobias Proud, who appeared to be willing to do most things for the sake of money; but the gaoler was adamant in his refusal. He would get himself hanged, drawn and quartered along with Mr. Brett if he were to do such a thing. Prisoners who were held for treason were to have no communication with the outside world, save such as was approved of by His Majesty's Solicitor-General, or another officer of the Crown with similar power.

So Julian was forced to sit whiling away the hours, and gazing through the barred windows of the Gate House upon the Press Yard beneath. He watched the fingers of the sun's shadows growing longer and longer as the day passed.

At five o'clock in the evening of the second day of his incarceration Tobias Proud brought in his supper. The rule was that the prisoners should eat early and at six o'clock came the general lock-up for the night. However, in the Governor's house, and for the privileged, this question of locking up was extended until nightfall. Half a guinea placed in the right hand at the

right moment could achieve wonders in the way of extension, informed the smirking Tobias. Julian took half a guinea from his pocket and tossed it to the warder.

"Thank you, sir," grunted Tobias. "I'll drink your health—you'll need it."

"Why not long life also?" asked Julian.

The gaoler leered, but did not answer.

Five o'clock—six o'clock—seven o'clock—eight o'clock—twilight was coming on. A still summer evening, without a cloud in the sky and stars beginning to twinkle as the daylight faded. Julian had been endlessly pacing up and down the narrow confines of his prison. The room was of a fair size and he discovered it took him four and a half seconds to cross the floor and four and a half seconds to return again. This he worked into hours and thus slowly the time went by. If only he could see Angela for a moment, if only he could tell her what he felt, if he could hold her in his arms! How were the Primrose family treating her? Would the Whigs take reprisals against her and her parents? What would happen to Doctor King and the Jacobite lords?

In the increasing twilight his mind went back to Ightham. He thought of those unfortunate years spent at Oxford and the unending kindness of Doctor King. Polly Broad had her place in his thoughts—that bitch of a woman had done so much to harm him. . . . And so onwards, through the kaleidoscope of the events of his life, and always there was that question to be answered—what was his origin and whence had he come? Who was his father and his mother? Angela had not asked him; she had taken him for what he was, and so too had Prince Charles Edward Stuart. . . . Colonel Julian Brett—that was a title and name not to be trifled with! He had caught the Whig Government by the heels, and that at least gave him a certain satisfaction, even if he knew that he was destined for a tortured and painful death. He had read books of prisoners and their long incarcerations, of the strange thoughts that came to them, of how they spent their time. Some had scratched their names upon the walls of their cells laboriously with table cutlery, others had tamed mice and made them their friends. He was glad he had not to face the prospect of that future. Anything would be better than that. . . . But Angela . . . His mind turned again to her. In the darkness she seemed to be standing close beside him and speaking to him with words of comfort and of love. What would she do when he had gone? He felt as if his heart must burst, yet what could he do? Just wait and hope and prepare to meet his face. He wondered if he should light the candle, the room was now quite dark, but candles cost two shillings each when they were bought from the grasping Proud, and he felt that he must husband his resources.

A key grated in the lock, the bolts were being shot back and an instant later the door was pushed open.

"Are you awake?" rasped the voice of Proud. "Well, here's a young lady come to see you with a special order from the Solicitor-General. Drat her, she chooses a queer time for her visit, but we can't refuse her authority. She says she's your wife, mister, the Lady Angela Primrose."

A lantern flickered, and silhouetted against it Julian saw the form of Angela.

"My darling!" he cried out. "Oh, my sweetheart!"

She came quickly towards him. "Julian! Julian! Yes, I'm real. Your fancy is not playing tricks with you. I've given this fellow money, he has promised to leave us alone for a little while."

"That's right," grunted Proud; "and mind you, no monkey tricks." He withdrew reluctantly and stood for a moment beside the door.

"I've brought Bette Hilton," gushed Angela, "and Evans and Mills are with us. Bette Hilton, the actress—you remember her?"

An exclamation of surprise rose to Julian's lips, but Angela had moved away and had picked up the flint and tinder to light the candle. The flame flickered and he caught the expression on her face. She had a finger to her lips urging him to silence.

"I'll be leaving you," growled Tobias Proud, "and mind, the pair of you, none of your tricks." He shrugged his shoulders as he lumbered away, and almost collided with Bette Hilton, Evans and Mills, who burst in a body into the chamber.

"Oh, Julian!" cried Bette Hilton, and started to whimper and wail in the agony of dramatic grief. "Julian," she sobbed, "they're going to kill you! Oh, my poor Julian—my poor Julian!"

Mills and Evans joined the chorus of feminine sorrow, and there was such a caterwauling and weeping that Tobias Proud was glad to be away from it. He came down the stairs from the cell and nudged the turnkey who stood on guard in the hallway.

"Joshua, did you ever hear such a noise? Four women all howling their heads off. Four of them, and all for the sake of one man! It's not Christian."

Joshua Flint glowered. He was already past his time for relief from duty and had only been kept on because Proud had promised him a percentage of his tips, but he knew the gaoler's skinflint methods.

"Why the four of them?" he demanded sourly.

"Not your business, nor mine, Joshua," said Proud, consulting the Solicitor-General's order. "The Lady Angela and attendants, that's what's written. It's plural, plain enough, and we can't argue about that. The Governor's seen the paper, and the women."

"Which one is Lady Angela Primrose?" asked the turnkey, displaying a casual interest.

"Heaven knows!" retorted Proud. "She who's howling the loudest, as likely as not."

Inside Julian's prison room Bette Hilton, Evans and Mills were keeping up such a weeping and wailing as would have awakened the dead, but under cover of the noise Angela was talking quickly.

"Julian," she said earnestly, "listen to me. We've come to rescue you. No, don't argue." She saw the look in his face. "It's the only chance; you'll get no clemency, they mean to have your life. Quick, Julian! And do what I tell you—please do what I tell you! And don't argue!"

"But it's foolish, Angela. You'll harm yourselves," he protested.

"Quiet!" she ordered. "Mills, and you, Evans, you know what you have to do."

Evans was already unfastening the portly Mills, who had taken off her cloak. A moment later she stepped out of her dress, which had fallen to the ground and disclosed that she wore another dress exactly the same beneath it. Angela picked it up.

"Excellent, Mills," she whispered. "Now keep up your crying and howling." She turned to Evans. "The cloak, Evans."

"Yes, my lady." Evans took off her own cloak and cut with a pair of scissors the tacking that held another cloak inside it.

In the meantime Bette Hilton was not idle. From under her skirt she had produced a female head-dress, the absolute replica of the one which the portly Mills wore, and also a large red theatrical wig which nicely matched her maidservant's colour of hair.

"A disguise?" asked Julian. "You mean to disguise me as a woman?" A string of protests were mounting to his lips, but Angela silenced him with a glance.

"Oh, be quiet!" she implored. "You mustn't argue, Julian. We've decided everything." She turned quickly to Mills and Evans. "Keep up your wailing, both of you. Don't stop for a moment or we are lost."

The two women redoubled their efforts. "They're going to kill him!" they wailed. "They're going to execute Julian Brett; they'll hold him on treason. Poor Lady Angela! Oh, what will she do? They're going to kill her husband! Oh, dear, oh, dear!" The lamentations reached a crescendo, and beneath the cover of it Bette Hilton went to work. From the paniers of her dress she extracted a theatrical make-up box.

"Come here, Julian, sit by the candle. We haven't a minute to lose. Keep your head still," she ordered.

Julian did as he was bidden. First, with the razor she narrowed down Julian's masculine eyebrows, and then she brought her grease-paints into action. Carefully she rouged his cheeks in great round patches, so that his complexion became like that of the apple-cheeked Mills. Next, his lips were touched up with carmine; she covered his chin with a flesh-coloured foundation and powdered it heavily. Julian had shaved earlier in the evening and there was no stubble to peep through.

During this disguising Julian continued to voice his protest. A soldier should not put on such gear! Why had they not brought him weapons and allowed him to fight his way out as a man? Why must he hide himself behind petticoats?

Angela added her coaxing to Bette's arguments. They were doing this to save his life, and it was the only possible chance. His life was precious, and to preserve it he must accept grease-paint and the indignities of paste and powder.

Julian capitulated reluctantly, and Angela and Bette exchanged understanding glances.

"The dress!" ordered Angela.

Evans handed it to her and continued her lamentations, urging Mills to

greater display of grief. With a quick movement Angela dropped the garment over Julian's head, and Mills was at hand to fasten it up.

"The cloak," announced Angela, and that garment went into place over Julian's shoulders.

"Now the wig," exclaimed Bette. "Here, I'll put it on." She stepped back and surveyed her handiwork. "Good!" she whispered. "He looks more feminine than I had dared to hope."

Julian's face, made up as it was, and now surrounded with reddish curls, might pass as a woman, provided it was not seen in strong light. And thanks to the meanness of the Government, and the catch-penny methods of the Governor, all the passageways of Newgate were extremely dark.

"The hat!" said Bette Hilton. "Here, give it to me. Mills, how do you wear your bonnet? Yes, I see, well to the back of the head and the hair pulled down in front. Is that it?" She fixed the head-dress on Julian's head, and certainly at a casual glance he had much in form and figure to compare with Mills.

"Now," whispered Angela, "we must try to fool those gaolers." She opened the door and peeped cautiously outside.

Down below, and at the foot of the stairs, Proud and Flint were talking in undertones. They were arguing about the division of spoil. Flint required two guineas, and Proud refused to give him more than one. Their conversation was bitter and to the point.

The crucial moment of the whole plan had arrived. Unless the guards and the gaoler were confused, everything would be lost. Angela was slim, Mills was stout, Evans was buxom and Bette Hilton was pert and elegant. If contrast went for anything there was confusion in these figures.

Angela looked towards Bette Hilton, received a tense nod of the head and raised her voice.

"Bette, I am distracted! She has fainted. The emotion has been too much for her. Run quickly and fetch a pitcher of water. Go quickly, I implore you."

Bette Hilton sped down the stairs. "Water!" she exclaimed to the gaoler. "Lady Angela has fainted."

Proud shrugged his shoulders. He disliked fainting women, and told her glumly there was a pump in the yard and an earthenware pitcher beside it. He pointed in the direction and Bette was gone.

A moment later Angela was shouting again. This time the instructions were to Mills. Would she go at once to the coach, which waited outside the gate? Yes, and bring the smelling-salts from it. The guard would let her pass. She must ask leave in the name of charity. Perhaps the watch would accept a guinea to drink her ladyship's health.

Mills made her way heavily down the stairs. She asked leave of Proud, and almost collided with Bette Hilton, who was hurrying back with the pitcher of water in her hands.

"She's fainted," cried Mills. "My lady's fainted."

"Then go quickly," ordered Bette. "Don't waste a moment."

Mills ran to the great gates; the turnkey on duty took the guinea she offered and without much protest opened the grill. She ran across the road

to the waiting coach and started rummaging amidst its cushions. A moment later she came back, passed through the grill and encountered a breathless Evans.

"Why, Mills!" exclaimed Evans. "You silly woman, that is the wrong bottle. My lady needs the strong smelling-salts. Oh dear, hurry for mercy's sake!"

Another guinea slipped into the hand of the turnkey and he pulled open the wicket. Mills, full of apology, and dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief, turned and hurriedly retraced her steps to the coach. Evans hesitated, made to follow her, and changing her mind came back through the grill in the great gates. The turnkey surlily let her pass. At this moment Bette Hilton appeared in a tremendous state of feigned excitement. She pressed a guinea upon the astonished turnkey and forced her way past before he could close the grill. Her ladyship's condition was alarming, the shock of seeing her husband too much, and something must be done.

"Hurry! Hurry!" exclaimed Bette Hilton, and ran from the prison gates to the coach, where she started a high-pitched argument with Mills as they rummaged about the cushions of the coach together.

"It's here," said Bette Hilton. "I know it's here. We brought it, don't you remember? Search everywhere, my dear. We must find those salts!"

Suddenly she dropped her voice. "Listen, Mills, start towards the gates and then run back to this coach. I will shout orders at you as I pass you, and go inside the prison. Don't you follow me, but come back to the coach and then hide yourself. Do just as we have planned and I'm sure this turnkey fellow will never know one from the other of us."

"Yes, madam," whispered Mills. "I understand."

The strategy worked. Bette Hilton, exclaiming that she had discovered what she wanted, came running back towards the grill door. Mills started after her, and then exclaiming she had forgotten something, ran back to the coach. She climbed inside it, shouting an excited word to the coachman on the box, and disappeared.

"What's the matter, miss?" asked Ian Gunn, the coachman, who had changed his role of head groom to Primrose House to become coachman again and Lady Angela's co-conspirator.

"She's fainted," cried Mills, who knew her part. "Poor Lady Angela, the emotion has been too much for her."

"For God's sake find what her ladyship needs. Hurry up, woman!" shouted Gunn. "Smelling-salts? The strong ones? If these horses weren't so restive I'd come down and give you a hand."

"I can't find it, I can't find it," wailed Mills, and began thumping and pounding the cushions again.

Inside Julian's prison, Angela was on tenterhooks. Bette Hilton, weeping and wailing and panting for breath, came hurriedly through the door. Evans clambered up the stairs and was sent hurrying away to fetch more water from the pump.

"Go back to the coach, Bette," cried Angela, "and tell that silly woman to hurry. The salts are there, I saw them with my own eyes. Oh, the poor

lady! My poor lady!" she sobbed, full of sympathy at her own supposed fainting.

"Angela," implored Julian, "stop this tomfoolery! I'll go mad in a moment. This howling and weeping! This coming and going. We're in Newgate, not Drury Lane."

Angela grasped him tightly by the wrist. "Julian," she whispered hoarsely, "you go—yes, go quickly. I will shout orders after you. Here is a guinea, push it in the hand of the man at the gate. He'll be too busy seeing what you have given him to look at your face. Go, my darling! Quickly! Quickly!"

"But what about you?" asked Julian. "I can't leave you here, Angela. What's my freedom if they hold you a prisoner?"

She swept aside his protest. "Please don't think of me, Julian. I'll stop here a little while, and then come after you. Remember to hold up your skirts as you go down the stairs. Yes, as a woman would do. But be careful not to have them too high, these devils must not see your feet. Go, Julian, don't waste another moment. Go!"

He paused for an instant and kissed her on the lips. "God bless you, darling." He reached the doorway and passed to the landing at the top of the stairs. Evans was coming up with more water, and Bette was calling hysterical instructions after her.

"How is my lady? Oh, tell me, how is she?" cried Evans. "No, go quickly." She beckoned to the figure of Julian. "A glass bottle with a silver stopper. Quickly, Mills!"

Julian came down the stairs, stepping as lightly as he could and holding the skirts as he had been instructed. Proud and Flint, wearied with so much coming and going of women, glanced morosely at him. Their gaze was resentful, for they wondered when this hullabaloo would cease, and thought the Lady Angela had already had her money's worth. Bette joined with him at the foot of the stairs and began speaking hurriedly. "What a stupid girl! Who but a fool could mislay a flask of smelling-salts? She deserves to be well whipped for her carelessness," she grumbled. "You'd think the coach was the size of St. Paul's the way she talks."

Walking quickly, Bette held tight on to Julian's arm.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" she cried. "I knew it was madness to bring my lady here. The shock of seeing her poor husband has been too much. What can we do?" Carrying on her one-sided and voluble conversation and still clutching on to Julian's arm, they reached the prison gates. "Sir, if I gave you another guinea would you let us pass?" pleaded Bette of the turnkey. "Her ladyship's condition is alarming. Those salts, if only we could find those salts!"

"A guinea," grumbled the turnkey. "But this is the last one I'll take. I've broken too many regulations as it is. This is the last time, you understand? Why can't you let the man be hanged and be done with it?" He snatched the guinea from Bette's hand and thrust it into his pocket. Jangling his keys, he unlocked the grill and pulled it open. "Good riddance to you, and to hell with you!" he shouted after them. "And don't you come back, either of you."



Julian and Bette reached the side of the coach and clambered in. The high-voiced conversation of Bette continued, as did the noisy and fruitless search for the missing smelling-salts. Mills, hidden in the shadow, was there to join her voice and to make the altercation two-sided.

"You're free!" whispered Bette. "You're free, Julian!" She raised her voice and started her scolding again, and Ian Gunn, seizing upon the opportunity, joined his voice to the babel.

The turnkey at the wicket gate stood glowering at them. Before long all this noise would disturb the Governor and then trouble would start with the explosive Major Power. He walked away from the wicket, across the Press Yard, and joined with Proud and Flint at the foot of the stairs. Proud was counting on his fingers.

"A slim woman, and a stout woman, and a pert and fashionable woman, and a slender and pale woman. My head's in a whirl, Joshua. I've never known a business such as this. The Solicitor-General must have been out of his senses to let this lot in, and at this time of night."

Joshua winked a knowing eye at the gate turnkey. "You never know, Tobias. There's a rumour that Lord Cooper's sweet on this Lady Angela, though she looks all skin and bone to me. Not much to warm your feet on on a cold night, but maybe he fancies the *dot* she'll bring with her and a nice little widow for a wife when we've got this varmint hanged and spiked."

Tobias chuckled. He liked humour of this sort; but his laughter was cut short by the arrival of Evans in a flurry of excitement and grief. "The poor lady!" she wailed. "Yes, she's better now, and without those blamed salts neither. She's with her husband, poor thing. Leave her quiet for a moment, good sirs, this is likely the last time she'll see him." She gave a series of quivering sobs, and with her face covered with her handkerchief, tottered towards the prison gates. The turnkey followed her and let her out with an ill grace, which was increased as this time no guinea came his way.

"That's three of them," muttered Tobias. "And her ladyship blubbing upstairs. Twenty-five guineas they've paid for this lot, and if tears goes for anything they've had their value."

"Twenty-five guineas, did you say?" demanded Joshua Flint. "Here, what's this? You told me she'd only given you ten. I want five guineas, do you hear? Five guineas, that's my money—five golden guineas, and not a penny less, or else I'll go straight up to Major Power and tell him every word of these goings-on, Tobias Proud."

"I was only speaking in a fashion of speech," protested Proud, trying to pass off a difficult situation.

"It wasn't," snarled Flint. "You spoke the truth for once, you liar! Come on, five guineas, that's what I want!"

Proud had sense enough to realize that regulations had been so far exceeded that he must give in without too much protest. He put his hand into his pocket, pulled out a little leather purse and counted five guineas out of it.

"Here you are, you blood-sucker."

"Blood-sucker yourself," retorted Flint, and took the money.

"Listen," interrupted Proud, for the conversation was painful, "she's talking to him—saying good-bye. Well, thank God for that. What's a guinea here or there, Joshua, when we might get hanged for what we've done?"

In the prison room at the top of the landing, and with the door now wide open, Angela was talking to herself.

"Yes, Julian my love, I will do all I can, but you know how hard Government feels towards you. You know if the worst comes I will use my right as the daughter of a peer and go to His Majesty himself and implore his clemency. Good night, my darling. How can I say when I shall see you again? This permission was difficult to get, Julian. You understand I shall do everything for you? Yes, everything. Good-bye!" She finished her monologue and raising her hand, kissed the back of it noisily. She waited for a moment and tiptoed to the door.

Proud and Flint, their *contretemps* over, were leaning amicably against the wall. Lifting up her skirts, Angela came quietly down the stairs.

"Thank you, good sirs," she said fervently. "The gratitude of a wife goes to you. My husband wishes to be left alone for a little while. He is much overcome."

"That'll be all right, my lady," said Proud. "I'll give him five minutes and lock him up for the night."

"Thank you, sir—thank you, sir," whispered Angela, and started to sob. Continuing her feigned weeping, she went across the Press Yard to the prison gates. She took out five guineas from her purse and dropped them one by one into the turnkey's hand, matching the gift of each coin with a heart-rending sob. The key rasped in the lock and the bolt shot back. The turnkey eyed her sullenly. Not even five guineas could stir his stony heart. "The devil take the hindmost," he muttered, and slammed the iron grill after her.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### ONWARDS TO ENVOI

THE escape of Julian Brett from Newgate Gaol was a minor sensation, and Mr. Pelham faced a dismayed and disgruntled Cabinet. He informed them that the moment he had received the news of Brett's flight he had communicated the matter in person to His Majesty the King and had received an unparalleled outburst of Hanoverian ill-temper. Now there was nothing for it but that the public must be informed of the whole occurrence, and from start to finish. Further subterfuge could avail nothing.

The Prime Minister shuffled through the mass of reports which lay upon his table. There was, for instance, twenty-four pages from Major Power

which contained a maze of hypothetical possibilities, but no real suggestion of how the person of Brett might be recaptured. There were the depositions of gaoler Proud and of the various turnkeys concerned. These all stated emphatically that Brett had had assistance from outside, and that a number of ladies—or women—had come to Newgate on the night of the rescue. But, as none of these men could state with any clarity whether there had been four, five or six in number, the testimonies were dismissed as valueless.

Mr. Pelham gave a heartfelt sigh. The fact that the french windows of the study were open and the summer sunshine made a lattice-work through the trees upon the Downing Street garden did nothing to relieve his gloom. He gazed thoughtfully and not a little apprehensively at the members of the 'Broad Bottom' Administration who were congregated before him.

The Duke of Dorset was picking his teeth, whilst Lord Gower frowned into space. His Grace the Duke of Montague was examining his nails, and the Duke of Bedford was surreptitiously sketching a nude of the ample proportions of Lady Yarmouth. The Duke of Grafton was watching this work of artistry and suggesting an addition here and there. The Duke of Richmond was looking at his boots, and His Grace the Duke of Argyle, to balance matters, was gazing vacantly at the ceiling. His Grace the Duke of Newcastle looked savagely at Henry Pelham.

"Henry," he said, "this is the devil of a mess. And, somehow or other, we must put a face on it."

"Agreed," said Henry Pelham, "but how can you put a face on a matter like this? We tried to cover the presence of Prince Charles Edward Stuart in London by saying this fellow Brett had masqueraded as His Royal Highness. Now we've lost Brett. What the devil can we say?"

"I'd save your breath," said the Duke of Grafton cuttingly. "The whole of London—and Britain, for that matter—knows that Prince Charles has been here. Why not leave well alone, and be content that Charles Stuart went away without starting another rising?"

"But the King?" protested Pelham. "His Majesty demands a scape-goat."

"Listen to me," said the Duke of Newcastle evenly. "His Majesty may demand, but it is for us, His Majesty's advisers, to enforce. Let us examine the situation. War clouds are blowing up all over Europe. France is longing to beat our throats, and Austria is wavering to her side. Heaven knows what Spain'll do, but the chances are she'll do no good for Britain. His Majesty has his German dependants and possessions to consider. He may fume against us, but one thing's certain: he'll not change the Tories for the Whigs, because once a Tory Government is in power the subsidies to German princelings would cease in a night."

There was a murmur of approval at His Grace's declaration, which coincided with a surreptitious knock at the door.

Lord Hardwicke entered and bowed to the Cabinet. He was fulsome in his apologies for being late, but they all must realize how onerous were the duties of His Majesty's Lord Chancellor.

Pelham cut short these excuses. "Has this fellow Brett been rearrested?" he demanded.

Lord Hardwicke touched the tips of his white effeminate hands together. "It is only a matter of moments, my dear Prime Minister. I have just left Lord Cooper and he tells me no stone will be left unturned to bring the criminal to justice."

"Cooper!" said Newcastle savagely. "Listen, my lords—gentlemen—I've something to say about this fellow Cooper. He may be Solicitor-General, but it seems to me he takes more interest in working his own affairs than those of the Government. We can't keep our heads buried in the sand; we should take notice of the gossip of the clubs and coffee-houses. William Cooper meant to marry Lady Angela Primrose. I suspect he promised some form of immunity to Lord Primrose if the match was brought about. It seems to me William Cooper has more reasons than one for wanting to hang this Julian Brett."

"More reasons than one?" said the Duke of Bedford, looking up from his drawing, which was now all but completed. "You're not going to tell me there's a lady in it?"

"Of course there is," said the Duke of Newcastle. "And a very pretty lady, with all the spirit of a thoroughbred. Lady Angela fooled Cooper into making him think she would marry him, she fooled her parents by marrying this good-looking fellow Brett, and now she's fooled us by getting her husband out of gaol."

"Then she must be arrested," said the Prime Minister, and tapped impatiently upon the table with his finger-nails.

The Duke of Bedford chuckled, and did not let this chance of crossing swords with Mr. Pelham go by. "Arrest her! Why, Henry, we start off with tragedy, we pass to comedy and onwards into farce. Should we also arrest that charming actress, Mrs. Bette Hilton? Because I have a feeling she has a finger in the pie. When a woman turns to journalism and writes an attack upon the Government, the next step she will probably take is gaol-breaking."

Lord Hardwicke did not join in the general laughter. He felt that his own department was being assailed, and even though Lord Cooper had made a consummate ass of himself its defence was necessary.

"A warrant has already been made out for the arrest of Lady Angela Primrose. I came here to suggest that Mrs. Bette Hilton should be summoned for interrogation. Further, sir, I suggest that we should suspend the Habeas Corpus Act and commit my Lords Primrose and Westmorland and the Duke of Beaufort to the Tower of London."

There was a moment's ominous silence.

"To what purpose, my lord?" asked the Duke of Newcastle quietly.

Lord Hardwicke drew a long breath. "We cannot leave matters as they are. These Jacobites and their schemes have disquieted the country. I know that I do not speak law when I say this, but why should we not take a leaf out of their book—why should we not play the game as a person like Bub Dodington would do? We have plenty of adherents nicely planted throughout London; then why not use them? Instruct them to play on public feelings and tell the mob these Jacobites have caused the rise of the cost of bread, the embarrassments of the Government and the political

unrest abroad. Let the mob be induced to rise and demonstrate against these Jacobites. What does it matter if Primrose House is burnt to the ground and looted, or other such establishments come in for a rough handling? Why should we not pay these Tories back in their own coin?"

The Duke of Bedford tore to atoms his caricature of the pristine Lady Yarmouth. "A lawyer throws down his pen and takes up the sword. What next? My lords, the Lord Chancellor has put a proposition before us. If it were his own, I would condemn it to his face, but I know otherwise."

"Otherwise?" echoed Richmond and Grafton together.

"Yes," said the Duke of Bedford emphatically. "My Lord Hardwicke is faced with a difficult task and he has listened to his subordinates. His Grace of Newcastle has told us a certain noble lord suits himself first and the Government afterwards. I name Lord Cooper, our Solicitor-General, for formulating this plan, and I think the less of the Lord Chancellor for repeating it to His Majesty's Administration." There was a murmur of agreement, and Mr. Pelham turned angrily upon the Lord Chancellor.

"Lord Hardwicke, we could not for one instant countenance such a suggestion. No, sir! Our duty is to tell the people that the prisoner Brett has escaped. If necessary, we must admit that Prince Charles Edward Stuart has been to this country and in this very city. That, sir, is what we must do, and I call upon you, amongst others, to see that this is done."

A rustle of agreement ran round the Cabinet. The members were all in agreement with Mr. Pelham. Only Lord Hardwicke remained disconsolate, licking his thin lips with the tip of his tongue. He wished to heaven he had never granted that interview to Lord Cooper which had kept him late from the Downing Street meeting. He fervently hoped that the Solicitor-General, despite the passion he was in, would have the good sense to avoid the type of mob demonstration of which he had talked.

"I fear, sir," he said quickly to Mr. Pelham, "I must plead to be excused. I wish to convey the deliberations of the administration to the law officers concerned."

Mr. Pelham nodded his head. "Certainly, my lord, I consider they should be advised as quickly as possible."

The Lord Chancellor moved rapidly to the door, bowed, and went out.

The Duke of Bedford was rubbing his chin. "I hope, Prime Minister," he said, "that Hardwicke goes very quickly. I trust he reaches Cooper before he starts those rats of pursuivants of his and the mob is raised."

The Duke of Newcastle cut in. "Henry, this is preposterous! If Cooper starts this business, I swear he must go to the Tower of London."

. . . . .

Throughout the long morning the pursuivants and agitators, headed by Jem Pringle, had been at work. Here, there and everywhere throughout the City of London they were standing at the street corners and giving tongue. Lord Cooper had suggested to the Lord Chancellor what was in fact a *fait accompli*. He had taken the law into his own hands and planned for a demonstration against the Jacobites and the Stuart Cause, along the same

lines of those which had taken place after the Risings of the 'Fifteen and the 'Forty-five.

The agitators whispered insidiously. The cost of bread, was it? Why, blame the Jacobites for that. Persecution, was it? Yes, but there would be worse persecutions when the Jacobites were in power. Did these poor oafs of London citizens not realize the Popish priests were ready on the other side of the Channel with thumb-screws, wheels and racks? Eager to come over at the first invitation and set the fires of Smithfield burning again. Apprentices, clerks, shopkeepers, manufactory workers and labourers listened and grew interested. They began to murmur amongst one another, and the crowds of listeners grew. Already unruly elements had appeared from the slums and were hanging about the outskirts of these tub-thumping meetings. These corner boys knew that if riot broke loose there would be good pickings, and they were eager to cheer on the agitators.

A crowd had gathered at Tower Hill, another at the Exchange, a third at the Minories, a fourth about Field Lane and a fifth, largely of apprentices, in the precincts of the City Road.

"Where to?" they cried. "Where to? Show us and we'll follow you."

"To the Jacobites!" shouted the agitators. "Smoke 'em out, burn 'em out! We'll teach a sharp lesson, and chase these rats from their holes. To the Jacobites!"

Soon the mobs were on the move, and converging to a central and pre-arranged meeting-place at the Lud Gate. The Watch was either too listless or disinterested to stop them, and no Dragoons or military had been called out. Within an hour more than ten thousand would-be rioters had congregated at the foot of Fleet Street, and were armed with staves, hammers, axes, and any other weapon upon which they could lay their hands. Women, too, had mingled with the men, filthy haridians who yelled themselves hoarse with bloodthirsty threats.

"To the Jacobites! Out with the dirty Stuarts! To the Jacobites! Long live good King George! To hell with the Jacobites!"

Lord Cooper was in his chambers in the Temple when he received the news that the mob was rising. Jem Pringle was his informant and he brought Polly Broad to amplify his assertions. His lordship listened to the information and gloated inwardly. He had taken the law into his own hands but he felt a personal justification. Why should he wait for the deliberations of this weak-kneed 'Broad Bottom' Administration? Pelham and the rest of them would do nothing, but if he acted quickly, and had the mob on his own side, he could not only shake himself with revenge, but also as a dictator of the moment achieve both favour and advancement.

"Good!" he said. "Good! Get them marching, Jem. That's the idea, get them marching! I must keep out of this, but remember I'm behind you. Justice is on your side. Take Primrose House in your stride, and don't go near Whitehall until you're strong enough. Primrose House, that's the place. We'll show those Primroses they can't play ducks and drakes with the British people. Listen to me, Polly Broad. A woman's voice will help, and mind you shout loud about the price of bread and starving children."

Pringle pulled his forelock and beckoned for Polly Broad to follow him out. Lord Cooper was already pacing up and down the room deep in thought. He took no notice of their departure, but distantly his ears had already caught the booming roar of the rabble and he knew that the march westwards from the Lud Gate and up Fleet Street had begun.

. . . . .

When Bette Hilton and Angela, with the help of Mills and Evans, had taken Julian out of Newgate Gaol, they had carried him to Duke's Court, which opened off Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Here the portly Mills had her own lodging, and they considered for the time being this was a safe enough hide-out. Even after they had left Newgate their journey in the coach to Covent Garden had been a dangerous one, for they had hardly reached Holborn before they had caught the clanging of the alarm-bell from Newgate, and when they reached the outskirts of Covent Garden they had dismissed the coach because of the attraction it was causing to the Watch. They had been forced to make the rest of the journey on foot.

Mrs. Mills's house in Duke's Court was a modest affair, but it had at least a sufficient comfort in the way of furniture, utensils and a well-stocked larder. Before Bette had left them both Julian and Angela had promised that on no account would they leave the house, and Bette, for her part, had said that she would see what arrangements could be made to carry them unnoticed from London. Her main idea had been to take them to Unthank Hall. As she had so lately become engaged to be married to Sir Guy Stanley, it was only natural that the prospective bride should go down to her fiancé's country seat and show herself to his tenants and retainers. She tentatively planned that Angela and Julian should ride with them as servants, and only the acquisition of the love-lorn Sir Guy was necessary for the scheme to be put in operation. As Bette explained, her season at the Theatre Royal was now terminated and for a while she was fancy-free. She and Guy had already decided upon this visit to Somerset, and as all Society already knew about their engagement the departure should not arouse unnecessary suspicion.

Angela and Julian, on the other hand, were not so sanguine. They realized that Bette must be connected with the rescue and wondered if she were wise further to jeopardize herself for their sakes, but Bette would not listen to any such pleadings. She had started a job and she intended to finish it, and if the 'Broad Bottom' Administration wanted to make further fools of themselves by arresting a play actress, they were welcome to the experiment.

"No, my dears," she had said emphatically. "Cooper and his pursuivants will be searching everywhere, but they'll only look in unlikely places. If we play this game openly and ride under Guy's livery, who's going to suspect you? Cooper owes Guy too much money to start arousing his animosity, and, anyway, William has too few friends to risk losing another."

Bette, having taken complete control of the situation, had left them. Mills would see to their wants and come across from the house in Catherine

Street whenever possible. She had added naively that although in the first instance she had thought it was a nuisance, it was fortunate that Mills, when returning to Bette's service after widowhood, had insisted upon keeping up her own small personal dwelling.

Thus Angela and Julian were now alone together under the same roof for the first time since their marriage. As Angela said, it was their honeymoon, but surely one of the strangest that ever newly-weds had spent. Julian had been profuse in his gratitude, hardly believing that he was not still dreaming; but the sight of himself in a mirror had proved reality. He had laughed aloud at the strange figure he cut in feminine garments, and had chaffed Angela as to how she found so much satisfaction in being courted by this man in maid's clothing.

Bette was nothing if not thorough, and as it had previously been planned that Julian was to be brought to Duke's Court, the wardrobe at the Theatre Royal had been ransacked, and a suit, shirt, stock, boots, hat and overcoat, with all the necessities of masculine attire to the final details of a razor, had been ready and waiting for him. He became truly masculine once again, and, content with his Angela, awaited the news that their next move could be safely made.

In the meantime, between love-making, Angela became thoroughly domesticated. She insisted upon making the bed, cleaning and tidying the bedroom and cooking a breakfast such as a king would desire.

"I think," said Julian as he ate, "you are the cleverest woman in the world. You capture hearts, you thwart politicians, you charm princes, you break into gaol and rescue prisoners, and you cook like an angel."

"And what else?" asked Angela, her eyes twinkling.

Julian rose to his feet and, coming round the table, bent down to kiss her. "Why, my love, you have my adoration for a lifetime."

"That's what I really wanted," said Angela with conviction, "because, you see, Julian, if I had not that, all that I have done and all that we have gone through together would mean nothing."

Julian smiled happily and grew thoughtful. "Where does this lead? What are we going to do, darling? We can't stay in England."

"Sit down, darling," Angela said quietly. "Listen; I've been making plans. Bette says that we can go to Unthank Hall in Somerset, and that seems to point in one direction. Julian, Somerset is not far from Bristol, and it is from Bristol that the ships sail for the Americas. Suppose you and I were to go to America—to North America—and start again? They say they want good strong colonists, that there is freedom of politics and thought. We could pay our passage and there would be money to spare to start in this new continent."

Julian pressed her to him. "Follow the sun to the west and seek a fortune? Why not, my darling? We've pledged that together we'll go to the ends of the earth, so why not to the west?"

She kissed him. "I'm glad, Julian. I hoped you would see as I do. What does it matter where we go if we are together? Together for our new



beginning, darling." She broke off suddenly. "What's that?" she asked quickly, and a note of fear was in her voice.

Julian listened. Distantly, he could hear the rumbling roar as of many waters, and yet in his heart of hearts he knew that this sound came from the throats of people.

"Cooper!" he exclaimed.

She looked up at him, wide-eyed and frightened.

"Cooper? What do you mean? Has he done something terrible? Julian, what do you mean?"

"I don't know," said Julian, "but that sound is of people. It's the mob, the angry mob, thirsting for blood. That devil Cooper would do anything. Think how you've thwarted him, how you and I have tricked him, and this last drop to fill his cup—my escape."

Heavy footsteps were thumping up the stairs, and a moment later Mrs. Mills burst into the room.

"My Lady Angela—Colonel Brett," she cried. "Have you heard? That terrible noise! The shouting? The mob—the London mob—all the cut-throats and ne'er-do-wells—the highwaymen, the apprentices, the foot-pads . . ." She hesitated, and stood panting for breath. "I fell in with them just by the Temple Bar, but I knew the streets better than they did and cut round behind. They're shouting out against the Jacobites and against the Stuart Cause . . . That fellow Jem Pringle's at their head, and lots of his kidney with him, and a woman, too, they call Polly . . . It's horrible—horrible!"

She began to sob, and Angela went to comfort her. "Mrs. Mills, dear, do calm yourself. What's horrible? What are they doing? Why are you frightened? You're safe here."

Mrs. Mills tried to restrain her sobbing. "My lady, I hardly dare to tell you. You've had trouble enough. They are shouting out against your father and mother—against Lord and Lady Primrose. The agitators, that Pringle and the others, are yelling for them to go to Primrose House and burn it down."

Julian and Angela exchanged apprehensive glances.

"You mean, evil against my father and mother?"

"Yes, my lady," gulped Mills. "That's what they're shouting."

Angela's whole frame went rigid. "Cooper's done this. He must be mad. He used to brag he had the mob in the palm of his hand—the 'sovereign mob' he called it. One day he'd use this rabble to make him the greatest in the land." She covered her face with her hands.

"Don't take on," cried Mills. "Don't take on, my lady."

Julian crossed to the door and took down his coat and hat from a peg. Angela dropped her hands and saw his action.

"Julian, what are you doing?" she demanded anxiously. "You're not going out?" She saw the determined expression on his face. "You mustn't, darling! They'll recognize you in an instant. They'll put you back in prison—they'll hang you—they'll kill you!"

Julian pulled on his coat and came across to where Angela was standing. He put a restraining arm about her.

"Listen, my darling, you and I have responsibilities, and whatever it costs us we must fulfil them. Do you understand?"

"But where are you going?" she cried, and Mills joined her query.

"I'm going to see what I can do—there must be something. In the press and excitement will they recognize one man? If they do, I can draw them off after me. A mob's a fickle thing."

"But . . ." began Angela, and the protest died on her lips. "Julian, yes, you're right, we must go and help them."

"We?" said Julian. "No, Angela, you must stay until I come back."

She shook her head. "Together, darling, means everywhere—yes, everywhere." She turned quickly to Mrs. Mills. "Mills, tell Mrs. Hilton what has happened. We will come back here as soon as we can. If we don't, she is not in any way to incriminate herself with us. I have money enough—some four hundred guineas—and Colonel Brett has money also."

"But, my lady . . ." Mills found that she was protesting to herself. Julian and Angela had gone. She heard their footsteps on the stairs and the slam of the outer door.

. . . . .

The mob was out of hand; in a great lurching, screaming mass it had swept past Temple Bar and was already fanning into the Strand. By St. Clement Danes a posse of the Watch had tried to make a stand, but the watchmen were old and their staves ineffective against such numbers. The paltry cordon broke and the mob swept on.

"To Whitehall!" they shouted. "To Whitehall! God save King George! Down with the Stuart bastards!"

Jem Pringle, Polly Broad and others of Cooper's men shouted themselves hoarse to counter the movement. "Leave Whitehall alone!" shouted Pringle. "The Primroses! Pull out the Jacobite rats! To Primrose House with you, my lusty lads!"

"The Jacobites, blast 'em!" screamed Polly Broad, her hair hanging tangled and matted about her face, and half the hem of her skirt trailing after her. She drank from the neck of a bottle of gin and handed it to a tattered old bitch beside her. "Bread for the starving!" she hiccupped. "Bread for the people of England! No burning-rings at Smithfield! To Primrose House—to Primrose House!"

A portion of the mob—those immediately about her—took up the cry of 'Primrose House', but their voices were not strong enough to carry the whole of the throng. Whitehall was the centre at which they aimed their demonstration, and the cries for Whitehall drowned those for Primrose House.

At this moment a diversion broke out. A party of sailors who had joined with the mob to see what luck might bring suddenly remembered the brothel of the notorious Mother Bonnet stood close by, and, forgetting the political nature of the demonstration, sought to pay off more personal scores. Very recently one of their shipmates visiting Mother Bonnet had been robbed and bludgeoned, and they considered this was a heaven-sent opportunity for retribution.

Before Pringle and the others realized what had happened, the sailors were off to storm the house of ill-fame. In a moment the door was beaten down and they were up the stairs yelling blue murder. The hooligan element joined them and a sea of expectant faces surged towards the brothel. Squeals of feminine anguish were heard, and the harlots, stripped mother-naked, were pushed one after another into the street. Others of the sailors pitched the furniture through the windows and, collecting it in a pile beneath, set fire to it and danced about the blaze.

Polly Broad did her utmost to stop this diversion. Her efforts were unfortunate, and coming into conflict with the seamen, they decided she was a harlot and shouting for Mother Bonnet. Such partisanship they would not tolerate, and before Pringle or his mates could interfere, the screaming Polly was seized, stripped stark naked and herded in to join the shivering harpies. Nor could Pringle do anything to save her, for the sailors' interest in political matters was rapidly waning and the sight of so much undraped femininity had aroused their nautical passions.

"Let her be!" snapped Pringle. "Maybe it'll teach her a lesson, the cow! I told her not to get drunk, and drunk she is as a fiddler's bitch!"

"And naked as a new-born babe, by the looks of her," leered an agitator. "A fine figure of a woman, too."

"Save me!" implored Polly. "Jem! Save me!"

But Jem Pringle had other matters to think about, nor did he feel equal to matching himself in single combat with an enormous red-bearded sailor, who was advancing amorously upon the naked Polly.

"To Primrose House!" he shouted by way of diversion. "Fetch the Jacobites out! Cut their throats! Down with the Stuarts! Hang the lot of them, the warmongers! Bread for the People! Bread for the People!"

The mob took up the cry, and Jem Pringle, slewing away to the left, turned his back upon the ruin of Mother Bonnet's establishment, Polly and the harlots.

"Essex Street!" he shouted. "Come to Essex Street, my hearties! Fill your pockets with gold, and think of the lassies afterwards. They like the guineas better than yourselves."

The mob took some interest in this stern logic, and especially the women, for they had no personal interest in the discomfited prostitutes.

"Bread for the People!" they screamed. "Bread for our children! Up Jem Pringle! Down with the Stuarts! God save King George!"

Into Essex Street went the mob, with Jem Pringle at their head, but he knew humanity well enough to realize that they were not yet sufficiently inflamed to attack a great lord's house. He must urge them on further, for the feudal laws of England held very tight, and for the mob to attack the privileged might bring dire penalties. A mounting-stone stood handy, and he leapt upon it. From this point of vantage he could see Primrose House, and he swept his hand towards the mansion.

"There you are!" he shouted. "The house of Primrose. That's where these Jacobites hatch their plots—that's where they plan to light the fires of Smithfield again. They'd bring back the rack, and the Inquisition. Listen to me, let's strike for King George. We'll end this Stuart! Up, my lads!"

Come on, my hearties! Primrose House—down with 'em! Down with the Jacobites!"

The mob started to take up the cry. The whole of Essex Street was packed with a seething ugly mass, weapons were raised in menace and already torches and brands had been fired for the burning.

The mob came milling forward. Men were tearing at the gates, and once these were torn from their hinges the surge forward would start. Once they were inside no power on earth could stop them until destruction and excess was complete.

One of the harridans had seen a curtain quivering and pointed a grimed hand towards it. She screamed out she had seen the frightened face of Lady Primrose and of his lordship. The birds were in the cage—the lusty lads should go forward and bring them out.

"Up—murder!" shouted Pringle. "Murder up! Fetch 'em out!" He looked down at the seething sea of faces, the saliva dripping from his lips, his hair hanging in wisps about his face.

A man was elbowing his way forward, and dimly in his excitement Jem Pringle found himself recognizing the cut of the fellow's jib. He broke off his shouting, thinking perhaps some message had come from Lord Cooper.

"Well, friend?" he challenged. "Are you coming to help us burn out the rats—these damned Jacobites?"

"Rats, is it?" said the fellow. "Aye, I don't like rats. No more than you do, Mr. Pringle. And I'll show you what we do with rats where I come from."

With a leap Julian was on the mounting-stone beside Pringle, and in the next instant his fist crashed on to the pursuivant's jaw.

"Rats, did you say?" shouted Julian. "Well, hold that one, you rat, for a start! Hold that one, Jem Pringle, for you're a rat, if ever there was one!"

Pringle gasped and tottered, attempted to shout for help, but another right to the chin stopped him. He went down with a thump, fell off the mounting-stone and his head cracked against the cobbles.

The mob gasped and murmured. What was this? Who was this fellow? What had happened? Already Pringle's men were shouting blue murder.

"String him up—hang him! Pull him to bits!"

Julian held up his hand, and for a wonder a silence fell. The silence of amazement, of a mob thrown off its balance by a happening it did not expect.

"String him up! Hang him! Pull him to bits!"

Julian threw back the mob's words. "Have I broken out of Newgate Gaol to meet with the same handling as the law would give me? It would have been better to have gone to Tyburn Tree and finished my life as the Whigs planned. What say you, good people of London?"

The good people of London, or at least that proportion of them as were in the mob, eyed one another suspiciously. Who was this strange young man who had punched Pringle, the pursuivant, on the jaw? Why was he to be hanged and what was this talk of breaking out of Newgate Gaol? A ripple of conjecture and interest went from lip to lip, and, like dogs, the mob held back, fearful of something they did not understand.

Julian gazed down at this sea of faces turned speculatively upwards. On the far outside of the throng he saw that Angela was moving quickly round the mob and towards Primrose House. By some subterfuge or other he would hold the mob and keep them interested, and she was to reach her parents and persuade them to fly for safety.

"What are you talking about?" shouted a woman, who waved an empty rum bottle and cackled at her question. "We've got work to do. Down with the Jacobites, and down with you too, if you stand in our way!"

The spell was broken and other voices took up the cry. "Who are you, mister?" demanded a burly seaman, and advanced menacingly towards Julian. He thought better of his intention and hesitated. This action gave Julian the opportunity that he wanted. History had proved that the London mob were kindly disposed towards malefactors. There had been several instances of the escaped criminal receiving sympathy from the very same people who, if he had been in the hands of the law, would have jeered and cheered at his death agonies.

"Come on!" menaced a sailor. "Who are you? What's your business? Speak up, man, or hold your tongue!"

"My name," shouted Julian, "is Julian Brett."

A hush fell over them.

"Why, yes," he exclaimed. "Colonel Julian Brett, lately held prisoner at Newgate Gaol, where, but for his adoring wife, he would have gone to trial and to the gallows on the capital charge of high treason. Well, friends, I'm here and amidst you. One man against all of you, and a hunted fugitive at that. And if the people of London won't save my neck from being stretched, no power on earth can. Take a look at me," he cried, as the murmur started again. "Well, here's the head—they'd have stuck that on Temple Bar, and one leg as like as not would have gone to Tower Bridge, and another to the Lud Gate. Isn't it better to see the lot all at once, and save your shoe-leather into the bargain?"

The old woman with the rum bottle cackled. A gibe like this caught her sense of humour, and in a moment others were laughing with her; but Pringle's men were already calling out for the arrest of the criminal, Julian Brett. They had ceased to be leaders of the mob and had become pursuivants again.

Jem Pringle, dizzy from the blow he had received, sat up. He rubbed his jaw and, catching the name Julian Brett, attempted to stagger to his feet.

"Arrest him!" he called unsteadily. "Arrest this Julian Brett. Clap him back to gaol! We're here for justice, so put the traitor back where he came from and we'll see justice is done."

The mob were not of the same frame of mind. They felt they had been fooled to become the cat's-paw of a political manoeuvre.

"Arrest him?" shouted a sailor. "Why should we arrest him? What's the crime in pretending he was Bonnie Prince Charlie? More bloody fools you for believing him!" The sailor waved his hand expansively. "Listen to me, folks. I've seen Prince Charlie a score of times. Aye, in Flushing, and in Brittany for that matter, and if anyone thought this fellow was him, they must have been blind, or drunk—or both."

The pursuivants looked more discomfited than ever. To effect an arrest in the midst of this concourse would be a difficult and dangerous matter, and Jem Pringle was always one to play for safety where his own skin was concerned. But the pursuivants and the police agents were not going to take matters lying down. They started to press and hustle themselves towards the mounting-stone. They wanted to get their man, but the people were too quick for them.

"Leave him be," shouted the red-bearded sailor, who, having found Polly Broad's charms overrated, came breasting his way through the throng. "If he's got something to say, then let him say it. We'll judge whether you take him or not. Come on with you—speak up!"

Out of the corner of his eye Julian saw that Angela was free of the mob and moving quickly down Essex Street to the side entrance of Primrose House. If he could only hold them for another five minutes all would be well.

"My friends," he cried, "will you hear me? Will you listen to what I say? The Pretender's gone—there'll be no Jacobite Rising. I was with him—yes, I was with Prince Charles Stuart when he walked these streets. I heard of his love for you and his desire for your prosperity. Evil self-seekers would make you think war is at your doorstep, that horror, famine and civil strife are upon you. They talk intolerance and yet by their own actions they show how intolerant they are. If you need me as a sacrifice, if you require blood, then in Heaven's name give me up to these agents. Give me a fair trial, that is all I ask. Do not send me to a political slaying to save the faces of blundering politicians, for that is not English."

Pringle's men were still murmuring and trying to interrupt. The mob had grown ominously quiet, and Julian knew he had caught their interest.

"If you take my blood, remember that blood is paid by blood. If you kill one man, remember that another man will be killed in revenge. Do you want brother fighting with brother? If the Pretender has gone, and if—as I swear to you—he left these shores out of love for you, do you want to leave a legacy of misery, poverty and sorrow to those who come after you? Do not let these paid scoundrels lead you into folly."

Pringle tried to interrupt. "Wait!" he shouted. "I'm Jem Pringle—I'm your friend. Don't listen to this clap-trap. Listen to me!"

"And chuck us into gaol for your pains," screamed a wizened hag. "We know you now, Jem Pringle. And we don't like you, nor your kidney, blast you!"

"I'm with you, missus!" shouted a sailor. He grabbed the astonished Pringle round his waist and, swinging him high above his head, pitched him into the midst of the crowd. At this feat of strength the mob roared with laughter. The sailor gazed about him, and thumped his chest with huge hairy hands.

"Any more of the same kidney? Fetch 'em along, and I'll chuck 'em further than I did the last!" he promised.

The agents were looking sideways at one another. The whole situation had taken an unpleasant turn, and they felt extremely apprehensive for their own skins. They began to withdraw from the crush. Jem Pringle was no

longer there to lead them, and without him they were at best a poor lot.

"Thank you, my friends!" shouted Julian Brett. "You've given me my hearing. What is your judgment? If I have the wits to escape from Newgate, will you send me back? If I am to go to Tyburn, it is for you to choose. At least I'll have a trial by jury, that's more than King George would give me."

"No!" yelled the mob. "Stop where you are! You're with us—you're safe enough." A hundred hands went up to acclaim him. An old harridan thrust up her gin bottle and bade him drink her health. A dozen women tried to force themselves upon the mounting-stone, and those who were successful in the scrum treated him to slobbering kisses. The fickleness of the London mob was proved again, and in a instant the persecuted was the hero of the moment.

Suddenly a cry went up, starting on the outskirts of this concourse of people.

"The Dragoons! The Dragoons are coming!" The shout was echoed again and again, and these people, who had good reason to know the severity of King George's Hessian Horsemen, scattered and fled. They rushed in every direction, shouting and screaming and trampling on one another. The fight had gone out of them and they feared the flats of those glistening sabres, and as likely as not the cutting edges as well.

Julian shook off his feminine admirers, and they broke loose from him in their haste to get away. The Dragoons were coming down, eight abreast, riding pell-mell into the remnants of the mob and smacking about them with the flats of their swords. Julian saw the charge and knew that to remain on the mounting-stone was madness. He leapt upwards, grabbed the top of the wall of Primrose House garden, pulled himself up and vaulted, to drop on to the soft earth on the opposite side.

Angela saw his fall from the library window, and ran from the deserted house to where he lay. Julian was still somewhat stunned, but she was able to bring him back to full consciousness. Whilst he sat up and rubbed his head she told him briefly her side of the story. She had reached her parents and persuaded them to fly. The faithful Gunn had ready the coach, and by now they would be safely on the road to the North. The plan was for them to go to Essenden, compose themselves there with Jacobite friends and later proceed by easy stages to Scotland and their estates at Moniaive.

"They are very grateful, Julian," she whispered.

"To you?" he asked.

"To both of us." She stooped and kissed him.

The Dragoons were coming back. They could hear the clatter of the horses' hooves upon the cobbles of Essex Street. There was a moment of tremendous apprehension. Would these Hessians burst into Primrose House? Had they orders to take the person of Julian Brett? The sound of the cavalry grew fainter, the Dragoons were passing up Essex Street and heading for the Strand.

"They won't come back, darling," said Angela. "I know they won't come back."

. . . . .

## ENVOI

THAT evening Colonel Julian and Lady Angela Brett started their journey towards the west country. Some considerable coaxing was necessary before the adoring Guy Stanley was willing to allow them to travel with Bette and himself, but once he was won over he threw himself wholeheartedly into the scheme to outwit King George's pursuivants. This was indeed a concession, for Guy's politics were distinctly Whiggish, and Bette considered this her own and personal victory.

For the first part of the journey Julian and Angela travelled disguised as servants, whilst Mrs. Mills was to follow with Bette's main luggage by carrier. Once the other side of Reading the masquerade was considerably relaxed, for Guy Stanley had information from London which showed that Mr. Pelham and his Administration were inclined to hush matters up and were venting their spleen upon the unfortunate Cooper. In point of fact, it seemed that the 'Broad Bottom' would be only too pleased if Julian Brett were to quit the shores of England as quickly and as quietly as possible.

Four days later the party arrived at Unthank Hall in Somerset, and here amidst idealistic surroundings Angela and Julian were able to enjoy a honeymoon, whilst Bette and Guy made preparations for an early marriage.

Mrs. Mills had now arrived, and the trousseau was discovered to be to Bette's entire satisfaction, so there was nothing to hold up the wedding. Guy would have preferred an elaborate affair to which all the neighbours and aristocracy might be invited, but Bette declined this. She had two reasons for wishing for a quiet ceremony. The first she stated openly to Guy. This was that she was a play actress and she preferred to meet with the starchy neighbours when she was Lady Stanley and not before. But to Angela she produced another reason. She particularly wanted Julian and Angela to be present at the ceremony. They had gone through so much together that she felt their names as witnesses would be a final omen of good luck for her. So Sir Guy gave way and the preparations went forward.

Bette and Guy were married at the charming little Church of St. Nicholas, and only the villagers and tenants were present. After the good parson Fletcher had married them there was a simple breakfast at the Hall and dancing and merry-making upon the lawn, in which the bride and bridegroom and Julian and Angela joined. But in the midst of this merriment Sir Guy's butler came to summon him, and a moment later Julian and Guy were in earnest consultation in the library.

A messenger had come post-haste from Bristol with the information that Sir Guy's agents had been able to fix a passage in the good ship *Triumph*, whose master, Captain Purvis, was an excellent seaman and noted for asking no pertinent questions concerning his passengers. The *Triumph* was sailing that night for the port of Norfolk in Virginia, and it was essential that all passengers should be aboard without delay.

An hour later Julian and Angela were driving towards Bristol. Their plans were finally made, and it seemed that Fate had played a hand. They



were going to Virginia, and here they both realized that they would find many friends and not a few who had suffered for their loyalty to the Stuart Cause.

The coach rattled its way over the cobblestones of the Bristol streets, and in the twilight they found the berth where the *Triumph* lay and went aboard her. Captain Purvis was pacing the quarterdeck, and no sooner did he know that his passengers were aboard than he gave orders to cast off. The vessel glided away from the staithes and moved into midstream. The tide was on the ebb and there was a capful of wind to fill the sails as quickly as they were shaken out. Soon they were in the Bristol Channel and Lundy Isle lay on the starboard beam with the coastline of Wales faintly in the distance.

Angela had come up on deck and she was full of excitement. The accommodation was better than she had expected, the bunk beds appeared comfortable, and the steward was a friendly person and willing to put himself to no end of trouble for their sake.

Julian smiled down at her. "I don't think there's anybody in the world who wouldn't go to trouble for your sake, darling."

"You're bigoted," she said, and laughed.

Hand in hand they walked to the stern of the ship. All that they could see of England was a faint line upon the horizon.

"There lies the past," said Angela, and shivered slightly as the wind blew her cloak from her shoulders.

Julian put his arm about her. Slowly he turned he round and pointed towards the west. The sun was sinking in a red golden glory and the beams of light silhouetted against the masts and rigging of the *Triumph*.

"The west, Angela—the Americas. The land of new beginnings. Let us follow the sun and find them. Let us find them together—you and I."

THE END





**AIDE-de-CAMP'S LIBRARY**

---

*Accn. No.....896....*

1. Books may be retained for a period not exceeding fifteen days.